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THE 1857 REBELLION

edited by Biswamoy Pati

DEBATES
IN
INDIAN HISTORY
AND SOCIETY

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THE 1857 REBELLION

The 1857 rebellion arguably represents the largest popular uprising against colonialism anywhere in the world during the period. Directed against the world's greatest colonial power of the time, it has become a milestone in the history of imperialism. The rebellion also stoked the fires of the Indian national movement and thus remains deeply ingrained in popular memory and folklore.

The debate on the nature of the rebellion began almost with the revolt itself. Ever since, it has been widely contested in the academia as well as in public domain and the ensuing debate has strongly informed history writing in India. In the 150th year of the Uprising, this volume brings together a selection of seminal writings—including some rare and out-of-print tracts—to present a comprehensive picture of the event.

The reader showcases the imperialist position—ranging from its location as a 'sepoy mutiny' to an effort to look for deeper causes. Alongside it highlights the way 1857 has been traditionally examined —as a 'war of independence', 'nationalist uprising', 'civil rebellion' or a 'popular protest' involving different sections of rural society. Expanding the horizons of the debate, Biswamoy Pati has added to this, discussions on adivasis and dalits, gender issues, the emergence of an alternative order, and other fascinating aspects related to the mentalities of the rebellion.

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Series Editors' Note

The Debates in Indian History and Society series focuses on the diversity of interpretations in historical discourse. The series addresses widely debated issues in South Asian history (including contemporary history) through edited volumes centering around sharply-focused themes or seminal writings that have generated arguments and counter-arguments resulting in worthwhile debates. In this context, the debates represent not simply differences in opinions but also offer important interpretative frameworks, which result in them acquiring a certain historiographic status. The approach encourages the interrogation of history, as distinct from presenting history as a collection of 'given' facts. The aim is to bring to readers significant writings, interpretations, and sources and to open to students bridge-heads into research.

It is easy to see that in a series such as this on debates in history a volume on 1857 will be high on the agenda. The historians' discourse in the crop of writings produced about the time of the centenary in 1957, centred around a controversy: is it correct to characterize the uprising as a part of the 'nationalist movement'? Earlier there was a controversy among British observers whether the uprising was the outcome of a conspiracy and was it caused mainly by the reaction to the introduction of greased cartridges for the Enfield rifle or deeper-seated causes of disaffection? In the Marxist historiographic tradition the debate has been on the 'class character' of the uprising: was it a move towards a 'feudal' restoration, given its leadership, or a part of the struggle of the peasantry primarily? Works from the subalternist point of view have raised another question: to what extent was the movement characterized by subaltern agency or autonomy? In the light of recent recrudescence of religious fundamentalism the issue debated is again different: was the uprising in

the nature of a 'religious war', a link in the long history of confrontations, sometimes described as a clash of civilizations? Much provocative writing will be found in the following pages, but even those dissenting would probably agree about the utility of this collection of writings on the debates on 1857.

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA
B. D. CHATTOPADHYAYA
RICHARD M. EATON

To generations of students I have interacted with at Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and various other institutions and universities in India and outside over the last twenty five years, who might not have even realized how much I learnt from them.

Introduction
The Nature of 1857

Biswamoy Pati

The 1857 rebellion was born out of historical processes ranging from the British policy of conquest and expansion to the colonial exploitation of India.[1] If one goes by the colonial mapping of the rebellion, it affected north-western, north, and central India. However, present-day research shows that the rebellion also touched parts of the east and the south.[2] It needs to be mentioned here that the nature of the1857 rebellion has been debated from the time of the event itself. The basic idea of setting things in order to retain the 'emerging empire' provided the rationale to colonialists not only to ponder over what went wrong but also to assess the nature of this upheaval. It was perhaps this aspect which kept the rebellion 'alive' for some time among the colonial administrators. Shifts in the way the nature of 1857 was located, were visible within the initial reactions and written about very soon as well. Whereas the logic of retaining the monopoly of the East India Company defined 1857 as a 'Sepoy Mutiny' (or, *sipahi*—as the Company's 'native' soldier was called), the idea related to wiping out the Company's monopoly fuelled the thrust to uncover deeper problems that needed immediate attention. The sheer diversity of interpretations, even among contemporaries, creates an apparent problem of labelling or categorizing them into a simple set of opinions emanating from any specific geographical part of the world.

The 'Sepoy Mutiny'—as it was labelled initially by most members of the 'master race' in India—not only challenged colonialism, but also forced it to re-invent itself to face a future that seemed uncertain and full of major challenges.[3] Those who focused on the 'Mutiny' theme saw it as the handiwork of a set of discontented sipahis who were unhappy with the introduction, in 1857, of the new Enfield rifle, with its distinct

ammunition, which required the bullet to be bitten before loading. Rumours that the grease used on the bullets was from the fat of cattle or pigs had deeper symbolic implications since cows were considered 'sacred' by the Hindus while the Muslims considered pigs to be 'polluting'. This created strong animosities and was perceived as an attack on Hindu and Muslim religious beliefs.[4]

Disraeli, representing a new generation of imperialists anxious about losing the fast-emerging 'crown jewel' of the British empire, pointed out that: 'The rise and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by an accumulation of adequate causes'.[5] For him, the causes of the uprising lay not so much in the 'conduct of men who were...the exponents of general discontent' amongst the Bengal army, as in the overall administration by the government, which had 'alienated or alarmed almost every influential class in the country'. Interestingly, in December 1857, Major Williams who was the Commissioner of the Military Police, North-Western Provinces, described 1857 as 'the great national insurrection in India'.[6]

Another feature influencing contemporary official thinking was the idea of the rebellion being the result of a conspiracy. More specifically, it was located as a 'Muslim conspiracy'. Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–98) wrote a tract (*Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind:* 1858), where he sought to examine the underlying features that determined the nature of 1857. This is interpreted by historians as an effort to counter the argument that located 1857 as a 'Muslim conspiracy'. However later on, in 1860, Khan wrote another tract (originally in Urdu) focusing on the 'loyal Muslims'.[7] What is normally not highlighted is that S. A. Khan's was perhaps the first Indian viewpoint that located 1857 as a 'rebellion' (viz. *Baghawat*), and critiqued imperialism and its policies in order to explain the causes of the rebellion.[8]

Contemporary writings generated political hysteria and racism. Some accounts of 'eye-witnesses' in fact inscribed inventions like the rape of white women during the 'Mutiny'.[9] These not only reinforced the barbaric image of the 'Indian' but also kept alive the need for retaining the 'civilizing mission' and providing legitimacy to colonial rule. It is striking that Charles Dickens, who was a major chronicler of the English working class, adopted a virtually condemnatory attitude vis-à-vis the rebellion. In fact, his racist stereotyping of all colonized peoples of Africa, the Indian Americans, and all other 'natives' was also shaped by a complex set of

factors conditioning responses to the rebellion in England.[10]

The 1857 rebellion demonstrated the way English opinion was divided at home. Thus, Chartists like Ernest Jones hailed the rebellion and unmasked the colonial exploitation of India.[11] The most serious dissenting voice was that of Karl Marx who linked the colonial exploitation of India to the anger displayed by the people during the rebellion. As he put it: 'The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked. Did they not, in India, to borrow an expression of that great robber, Lord Clive himself, resort to atrocious extortion, when simple corruption could not keep pace with their rapacity? While they prated in Europe about the inviolable sanctity of the national debt, did they not confiscate in India the dividends of the rajahs, who had invested their private savings in the Company's own funds?...These are the men of "Property, Order, Family, and Religion."'[12] Marx and Engels hailed the unity shown by the different religious communities opposed to British colonialism.[13]

Given its social composition, the Indian National Congress denounced the 1857 rebellion after its formation in 1885. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the rebellion attracted and inspired the first generation of Indian nationalists. The early nationalists were guided by the position of some colonial officials who, as outlined earlier, saw it as a 'national insurrection'. With the development of Indian nationalism, the rebellion was incorporated and appropriated as a part of the nationalist imagery. Thus, V. D. Savarkar, the first Indian to write about the rebellion from a nationalist position in 1909, called it the 'Indian War of Independence'. His pro-nationalist stance made Savarkar look with contempt at the British assertion of the greased bullets as sparking the 'war' and reject it. He argued, if this had been the issue it would be difficult to explain how the rebellion could attract Nana Sahib, the Emperor of Delhi, the Queen of Jhansi and Khan Bahadur Khan to join it. Besides, he also highlighted the fact that the rebellion continued even after the English Governor General had issued a proclamation to withdraw the offending greased bullets. Savarkar went ahead and connected the rebellion to the 'atrocities' committed by the British.[14] This factor of unity—cutting across religious boundaries—in fact, makes his argument striking and goes against the subsequent shift in his position, that saw him accommodate

the Hindu–Muslim divide as a virtual 'fault-line' in Indian history. Consequently, the early nationalists described 1857 as a rebellion through which the 'Indians' opposed the sufferings and exploitation imposed on 'them' by British colonialism.

With the development of the working class movement in India, efforts were made to analyse the 1857 rebellion from a marxist position by pioneers like M. N. Roy and Rajni Palme Dutt. Roy was rather dismissive of 1857 and saw in its failure the shattering of the last vestiges of feudal power. He was emphatic about the 'revolution of 1857' being a struggle between the worn-out feudal system and the newly introduced commercial capitalism, that aimed to achieve political supremacy.[15] In contrast, Palme Dutt saw 1857 as a major peasant revolt—even though it had been led by the decaying feudal forces—fighting to get back their privileges and turn the tide of foreign domination.[16] Consequently, one witnesses the beginnings of a process that interrogated and critiqued the internal feudal order, even while lauding the popular basis of the rebellion.

The access to official records and archival sources since independence saw interesting developments related to debates on the nature of 1857. A rather sophisticated nationalist historiography that took cognizance of the complexities of the rebellion evolved in the process. It included nationalist historians like R. C. Majumdar, S. B. Chaudhuri, S. N. Sen, and K. K. Datta, who were not uniformly comfortable with the idea that the 1857 rebellion was the 'First War of Indian Independence'. One needs to note that S. N. Sen's work was sponsored by the state and his authoritative 'official' post-colonial account of 1857 obviously had an agenda—of celebrating Indian nationalism. In fact, the spirit of the Indian national movement left its deep imprints on these historians. This meant that some of them referred to ideas like nationalism supposedly witnessed during the rebellion or saw the very inception of the national movement contained in the 1857 rebellion. They went very clearly beyond the simple categorizations that had seen two dominant and opposing narratives—lauding the British, the victors who had 'won' the war and the claims of the 'rebellious Indians', who had been 'defeated'. This meant a shift to understanding the internal contradictions (viz. the Indian 'rich', which included the moneylenders and buniyas) and the popular basis of 1857. These views did not concentrate merely

on influential classes like the explanations provided by contemporary British officials, or statesmen like Disraeli. It is here that nationalist historiography worked on and developed the legacy of the marxists, even as some historians disapproved of labelling the rebellion as the 'First War of Independence'. In this sense at least nationalist historiography threatened to transgress the boundaries imposed on it by the early nationalists. The nationalist historians also accorded a space—howsoever limited—to the popular basis of the rebellion.[17] They highlighted the 'mutiny' component of 1857 that shifted and assumed the nature of a 'civil rebellion'. Nationalist historiography, therefore, most certainly opened up new possibilities.

Since peasants did/do not write their histories, their interactions with the rebellion remains undocumented. But, is it possible to ignore the folklore, issues related to moral economy and traditions of resistance associated with the 1857 rebellion? Moreover, can one afford to ignore the connections between 1857 and the peasant revolts of the preceding phase, or those outside the northern region of India? One can for example refer to the rebellions of the Bhills in 1852 (in Khandesh, Dhar and Malwa), the Santals in 1855–6 (in Rajmahal, Bhagalpur, Birbhum), the Mapillas over the 1836–54 period in Malabar, the Kandhas in Ghumsar and Baudh (1855–60), the Savaras of Parliakhemedi (1856–7). In the same way, the Indigo Revolt in Bengal (that began in 1859 and was directed against white planters) serves as an example, inspite of our being repeatedly told that the Permanent Settlement and *bhadraloks*, left Bengal as a 'zone of peace' in this phase.

Unless one locates historical processes in a narrow, factual manner, it would be indeed almost impossible to assume that peasants cannot think or incorporate components from the past while struggling against colonial rule and their immediate oppressors. It is, therefore, difficult to study the rebellion without taking into account the social history of peasant protest prior to 1857 and in the ensuing period.[18] This would bring out the complexity of issues and invert many commonly-held positions associated with the rebellion, including the point that colonialism was its virtual 'creator', the over-emphasis on related 'economic' factors, or a point that has almost got frozen as common sense—that the impact of the 1857 rebellion was not felt outside the Indo-Gangetic plain.

With the passage of time the development of other historical approaches generated several debates on the nature of 1857. The first exhaustive work on the rebellion was published in 1957 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the event. Edited by P. C. Joshi, this was the first attempt of marxist historians to focus on the diversities and the specificities of the 1857 rebellion. The efforts included assessing 1857 against the colonial backdrop, examining aspects of participation, and focusing in a major way on internal contradictions. Its significance lay in the use of Urdu sources and folk songs.[19] In many ways this work inspired a serious spell of writings on the rebellion. Issues ranging from the way the nature of 1857 was conditioned by the background,[20] the demographic and ecological features, social composition, the role of the peasants, especially the 'rich' peasants[21] to questions related to its organization,[22] middle-level leadership,[23] activities in the areas where British authority had been subverted and whether it was indeed a restorative rebellion[24]—have attracted the attention of historians. It is the popular level of the rebellion that concerned Ranajit Guha and the subaltern historians. Guha highlighted features such as the colonial labelling of 'dacoit leaders' and 'dacoit villages', the targeting of European properties, planters and factories, colonial records as well as sahukars and buniyas.[25] Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Tapti Roy took up specific area studies that have brought forth fascinating complexities of popular militancy that had earlier remained ignored.[26]

More recently—since the 1990s—historians have focused on the popular dimensions of 1857, including the specificities of the involvement of adivasis,[27] low castes and outcastes,[28] popular culture[29] and mentalities,[30] and questions related to the alternative order that emerged.[31] Present-day scholars working within the paradigms of cultural studies have also sought to delineate the way racism emerged as a virtual fall-out of the rebellion. By focusing on the 'rape' of white women during the rebellion, colonialists inscribed images of the 'barbaric Indian' in the colonial imagination.[32]

The 1857 rebellion represents possibly one of the most powerful and dramatic anti-colonial movements that *also* questioned internal exploitation. The intricacies and contours of the rebellion have made it the subject of intense debate and interrogation, especially the emergence of regional studies has added several new dimensions to the existing

scholarship. In the last two centuries the focus of the debates have shifted from the mutinous 'sepoys' and seeing in it the origins of Indian nationalism to studying the internal contradictions, the participation of the common people, and the diversities of the rebellion. These features reflect corresponding shifts in modern Indian historiography, which have both influenced and been influenced by the way the nature of 1857 has been debated.

SEPOY MUTINY

> [The] military outbreak that has, by its extent and duration, astonished the whole civilised world...at one time threatened seriously to affect the *prestige* of a flag that during the past century and a half has waved in proud supremacy over the fortresses and cities in India.
>
> —Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny,* Vol. 1, p. 1 (emphasis in original)

The Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857–8, began with Indian or 'native' soldiers in the Bengal army of the English East India Company. The starting point of the characterization of the rebellion as a 'Sepoy Mutiny' can be traced to the official accounts of people like William Muir, the secretary to the government of North-Western Provinces. For Muir, 1857 was a 'mutiny of troops'—a struggle between the government and its soldiers.[33] These initial interpretations concentrated on the 'mutiny' factor carefully disguising the problems created by the Company rule. The political effort to retain control over India and the counter-insurgency operations directed against the 'mutineers' made the colonial officals 'perceive' the discontent of the 'sepoys' as the primary factor in the debates. Interestingly, the Company's method of emphasizing caste in its army and giving importance to the religious angle were both ably sustained by and in turn reinforced the greased cartridges theory while explaining the nature of the rebellion.

Charles Ball and J. W. Kaye were among the pioneers who wrote about 1857 from the 'Sepoy Mutiny' perspective.[34] Both Ball and Kaye attached tremendous importance to caste status, which the sipahis thought were undermined in the cantonments. Ball ascribes the undermining of the caste status of the sipahis to stopping and curtailing of certain concessions. He cites factors like the loss of privileges, charging the sipahis for their

dak that had previously been allowed without postage tax, new tolls that were now levied on them when they travelled, withdrawal of privileges when they bought their provisions, and the curbs on their right to choose their postings (viz. whether they would or would not cross the sea on active service). Promotions—earlier based on seniority and not on merit or ability and decided by the men themselves—began now to be decided by military authorities. Being at the lower rungs of the army meant low salaries which left the sipahis dissatisfied. These features asserted European supremacy and were irritants, especially in a context wherein the few Europeans attached to the regiments did not speak or understand the language of the men they commanded.[35]

Kaye underlines the importance of the greased cartridges which caused an alarm among the sipahis. The new Enfield rifle bullets were coated with grease made from the fat of cows (sacred to Hindus) and of pigs (anathema to Muslims). Since the cartridges had to be bitten before being used, the Hindu and Muslim sipahis interpreted it as part of a plot to force them to adopt Christianity. The 'native' sipahis believed that through the cartridges, their 'Christian masters' aimed to defile their caste and their religion. Both Ball and Kaye refer to this point and to the shock waves it generated when this was discovered in the cantonments. Similarly, both mention the Dharma Sabha in Calcutta (which they define as a body aimed to 'preserve' Hinduism from the onslaught of the English) projecting the issue of cartridges as a devise aimed at forcing the sipahis to embrace Christianity. The British replaced the cartridges when the mistake was realized; but suspicion persisted. In February 1857, began a series of incidents with sipahis refusing to use the cartridges.[36]

In fact, present-day historians refer to the reforms of the 1830s, which disturbed power relations that had bestowed financial security and a high religious and social status for the sipahis and their families. Their *batta* (viz. allowance) which they received during service in foreign lands was discontinued. From the 1840s the sipahis were given permanent postings in distant military outposts of Sindh and Punjab—located as 'foreign lands'—away from their families raising apprehensions about the violation of the caste status of the Hindu sipahis.[37] Coming to the immediate background of 1857, the idea of turning towards internal recruiters like Kunwar Singh, Nana Sahib, or the Rani of Jhansi reflected a desire of the sipahis to get back their lost status.[38]

NATIONALIST UPRISING

When ...taking the searching attitude of an historian, I began to scan that instructive and magnificent spectacle, I found to my great surprise the brilliance of a War of Independence shining in the 'mutiny of 1857.'

—V. D. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*
(Author's Introduction, vii)

India's independence meant the availability of sources which was a great help for the nationalist historians. The pioneers in the field included R. C. Majumdar, S. B. Chaudhuri, S. N. Sen, and K. K. Datta.[39] R. C. Majumdar, while pointing to the 'mutiny'/'rebellion of the people' divide, was critical of the contemporary bhadraloks like Kishorichandra Mitra who wrote in 1858 that it was a 'revolt of a *lac* of sepoys' and some of the associations (like the British Indian Association and the Muhammadan Association of Calcutta) that had passed resolutions condemning the 'outbreak of the Mutiny'.[40] Examining the nature of 1857, Majumdar notes the 'civil population' revolting in the localities only after the withdrawal of British authority, in a context when British authority had collapsed and there was a political vacuum. Emphasizing the absence of coordination among the different groups of rebels, he highlights the personal interest of different groups and individual leaders to underline the absence of a common cause. Majumdar also mentions the involvement of the 'goonda elements' in 1857.

The widespread nature of the 1857 rebellion in northern India and the way it turned into a 'mass movement' in eastern Punjab is significant for Majumdar. Simultaneously, he specifies Awadh where the rebellion 'seemed to be of a popular or national character' due to 'particular local reasons' since it 'was so arbitrarily annexed only a year before the Mutiny'. Discussing some of the major leaders of the rebellion like Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and Kunwar Singh, he mentions the 'special grudge' they had against the British. Although these leaders could also have been inspired by patriotism, there was no evidence to support this aspect. Majumdar also questions the idea that these four were 'natural leaders' under whom the Indians fought the 'war of Independence' and the 'love for their country' that determined the participation of the civil population.

Majumdar is particularly critical about the tendency to see the unity of Hindus and Muslims that was displayed during the rebellion. He

cites the evidence of communal riots in parts of the United Provinces, where the Muslims shouted for the revival of the Muslim kingdom and the suspicion and jealousy among the Muslims on the one hand and the Marathas and the Sikhs on the other. Dismissing the idea of the rebellion being a national war of independence, he delves on the attempts by the local chiefs and talukdars to re-assert their lost rights and argues that it was not possible to see nationalism or patriotism in 1857 or at any time before it. In the frontline areas of the rebellion like Rohilkhand and Awadh, independence from British control had been achieved by the sipahis and it was more a question of 'maintaining and not gaining independence'. This phase however was marred by subversive activities and infighting based on the interests of 'individuals, classes and States' and the absence of patriotism among the people. He felt that the 'war of independence' theme involving the civil population could be accepted only to explain the anti-British component.

S. B. Chaudhuri emphasized the bifurcation of 1857 into two 'distinct historical aspects'—viz. the military mutiny and the civil rebellion—as a 'new approach', that enabled a proper evaluation of the nature of 1857.[41] Whereas the sipahis struck the first blow, they did not produce the leadership necessary to canalize the activities of the 'rebellious troops'. This meant that some 'civil elements' assumed the leadership of the 'movement' and turned it to their advantage. This toned down the military character of the revolt and saw the merging of the military rising into a popular rebellion. Chaudhuri referred to the religious and race components that marked 1857. Describing the popular basis of the rebellion, he mentions the terror that was unleashed to suppress it. Chaudhuri analyses how the British government in India viewed 1857–8 as a vast upsurge of the people. He refers to various measures adopted to meet the crisis ranging from raising troops and taking loans to the failure to re-establish its authority in several areas. Although he views the 'civil rebellion' as mainly a talukdari movement, he refers to the participation of different sections of the people, including the low castes and cultivators.

1857 is both a mutiny and a rebellion for Chaudhuri. People directed their wrath against their oppressors and targeted government offices, records, police stations, telegraph poles, railway lines, and engines. Interestingly, he refers to areas like Saharanpur where the houses of *banias*

were burnt along with their accounts, accounts books were carried out of the town and torn up on the highway. As discussed, the *mahajans* were on the side of the British. Factories owned by Europeans were destroyed and indigo factories targeted. Paradoxically some feudal sections (like some of the big 'native princes' and chiefs) stayed out of a revolt that was very often characterized as feudal.

Significantly, leaders did not remain confined to their areas but sought to mobilize the people in adjacent tracts. Well-known leaders like the Fyzabad maulavi, Firuz Shah, Tantia Tope, the Rani of Jhansi, Rao Sahib, and Kunwar Singh were visible in many fronts during the rebellion in upper India. Madho Singh of Bhognipur, joined the rebels at Kalpi after the re-occupation of Kanpur by the British; Beni Bahdur Singh of Nasratpur fought the British at Allahabad and later joined the rebels at Lucknow; Mehndi Hasan of Sultanpur dominated the districts surrounding Awadh and surrendered only when the rebellion was dying out. Some of the other leaders Chaudhuri discusses are the palwar chief Madhoprasad of Birhar, whose activities could be traced upto Azamgarh; Udresh Singh who fought at Lucknow, Gorakhpur, and Azamgarh; and, the Sagar leader Daulat Singh who swept through Jalaun, Jhansi, Hoshangabad and Rajputana. This effort to create solidarity transcended barriers of caste, religion, and region and demonstrated a level of social brotherhood visible in different areas.

Chaudhuri is critical of colonial officials who refused to acknowledge the 'conversion' of the mutiny into a rebellion and considered it a mere 'mutiny' of troops. Labelling of 1857 as a rebellion of the riff-raff is unfounded and weak. Disagreeing with Majumdar that it was not the result of a conspiracy, Chaudhuri underlines its popular basis by referring to the background years of discontent and anger and focuses on Awadh to illustrate his point. He speculates about the possible inception of the nationalist movement in the 1857 rebellion.

The organizational aspects of the rebellion have been examined by S. N. Sen.[42] He points out the significance of the circulation of *chappaties* observed in parts of north India by many colonial officials in the preceding phase of the rebellion. Sen closely studies the letter supposedly written by Rani Laxmi Bai in March 1856 to her family priest at Puri. His method of questioning its authenticity (on the basis of the English style of dating, the wrong seal used, and the reference to greased

cartridges—which did not come to India before November 1856—and the Rani's presumed presence in Meerut, from where this letter was written since there is no evidence that she had ever been there) reflects the development in the historian's craft over this phase in India. Sen is critical of arguments that saw the rebellion as a conspiracy inspired by any foreign power. According to him, the rebellion originated in sipahi discontent and then derived its strength from the widespread disaffection among the civil population.

Neither the entire non-European sipahi component nor all the people were behind the rebellion. A section of the sipahis fought for the government, while some regions like the Madras Presidency remained largely unaffected. The strength of the rebellion was precisely because it was supported by people from diverse sections ranging from the Sikhs in Delhi and tribesmen in the frontier, the Bhills in Rajputana and Central India to the Pasis in Awadh. No community, caste, or class was entirely for or against the rebellion. For Sen it united Hindus and Muslims. He saw Awadh as a region where the 'revolt assumed a national dimension'. Emphasizing the need to be cautious, he refers to the way the patriots fought for their 'king and country', although they were not champions of freedom. He is critical of the leaders who would have 'set the clock back' for the tenants in case the rebellion had been successful. Sen is dismissive of both the influence of religion on those who had joined in the rebellion and interpretations of a clash of civilization—between barbarism and civilization. About the latter, he emphasizes the logic of hatred and animosity based occasionally on rumours and mentioned the atrocities perpetuated on the common, innocent people during the counter-insurgency operations.

The policy of colonial expansion and the anger this bred in different parts of the 'vast country' were significant factors for K. K. Dutta. The presence of important pre-1857 movements illustrate that the rebellion was neither isolated nor sudden.[43] While discussing the crucial question whether 1857 was a 'mutiny' or a 'revolt', Datta analyses a shift from mutiny to revolt. He emphasizes that the people actively supported the rebellion, especially in the United Provinces and Bihar, and focuses on the indiscriminate and ruthless methods adopted in different parts to suppress the rebellion which demonstrate the popularity of the rebellion.[44]

RESTORATIVE MOVEMENT

It is true that the 1857 uprising was led by Indian feudals (but not them alone!) and they were not the makers of events, nor sole masters of India's destiny.

P. C. Joshi '1857 in our History' (from his edited collection *1857: A Symposium*, 182).

Among the historians who reflect on the nature of the 1857 rebellion from the point of view of a restorative movement mention must be made of Talmiz Khaldun and E. I. Brodkin. Khaldun teases out the strong anti-imperialist component of 1857 that got diffused after the initial success of the rebellion.[45] In this context feudal rivalries emerged. This was not just between the Mughals and the Marathas but also the feudal zamindari elements who had hoped to regain their lost privileges. Problems developed when they realized that their control over the rebellion was getting increasingly undermined. Moreover, whereas Bahadur Shah was declared the Shahenshah-e-Hind on 11 May 1857, he was actually reduced to a mere figure-head. Formal power was vested with the Court of Administration. This body had six members from the army and four from the civilian department. Bahadur Shah had the right to attend the Court and decisions had to have his stamp of approval, though these were taken by the latter and the Emperor was forced to put his signature.

The restored Emperor was subjected to a system where he had to accept decisions taken in line with the panchayat system the rebels. The inner tensions among the people wielding power were due to deeper conflicts between the dying aristocracy and the new peasant proprietors. The feudal aristocracy was unhappy with the way efforts were made to undermine its position by the rebels. On the other hand, the class origins of the peasant-sipahi rebels prevented them from attempting any form of land nationalization or control of prices and they had to depend on arbitrary taxation to raise resources. The Court did pass orders to uproot the zamindari system, provide property titles to the real tiller and overhaul the system of revenue assessment. However, these were not implemented, since the Court had a short life. It becomes clear from Khaldun's account that the restoration of the feudal order was far from being a reality, even as it was undermined.

The crucial question related to the use of labels such as 'rebels' and 'loyalists' by the colonial officials to define some of the princes and landed

sections that gained currency during and after the rebellion. Brodkin critiques these simple categorizations based on the panic generated by the rebellion among the British. As he points out, some of the 'rebels' were forced by the prevailing circumstances to be on the side of the rebellion. The examples he cites range from the nawab of Farrukhabad to the emperor Bahadur Shah, who were virtual prisoners of the rebels. He focuses on the emergence of traditional rivalries in many parts of northern India after the retreat of British authority. This saw the rise of major struggles of succession, which meant that the labels of 'loyalty' and 'rebel' lost their relevance.

Brodkin suggests that in case the struggles involved Hindu-Muslim rivalry the British tended to categorize these stereotypically—viz. the Hindu factions as 'loyal' and the Muslim factions as 'rebellious'. He provides examples to illustrate this point. In the Rohilkhand tract the Pathans along with the nawab of Rampur emerged successful and succeeded the British, although only the former were located as 'rebels'. Similarly, Mahmud Khan, the nawab of Najibabad was falsely labelled a 'rebel' for restoring Pathan power over the Rajput Thakurs who claimed to be on the side of the British. These formulations question simple conceptions of restoration of the erstwhile landed sections after the retreat of the British.

CONSPIRACY VERSUS ORGANIZED MOVEMENT

> As regards the rebellion of 1857, the fact is that for a long time, many grievances had been rankling in the hearts of the people. In course of time, a vast store of explosive material had been collected. It wanted but the application of a match to light it, and that match was applied by the Mutinous army.
>
> —Syed Ahmad Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (page 3)

The categorization of the nature of 1857 as a conspiracy can be traced to the time of the rebellion itself. In government circles, 1857 was often described as a 'Muslim conspiracy'. This was one very major factor that prompted Syed Ahmad Khan to counter it.[46] K. M. Ashraf studies the connections between the Wahabis and the 1857 rebellion, pointing to its revivalist components.[47] This was rooted in their century-old hostility vis-à-vis the British, which was conditioned by the anger of the 'Muslim ruling classes'.[48] Ashraf touches upon the references to *jehad* (holy war) and the *fatwas* (decrees), against the British, by maulavis in the cities.

Moreover, he analyses the association of leaders like General Bakht Khan, a Wahabi, with the rebellion, together with a network of the Wahabis in northern India. He examined the role of the Wahabis in the 1857 rebellion both in and outside Delhi. His essay illustrates the merging of the identity of the Wahabis with the rebellion in some areas.

The Gwalior contingent that played a vital role during the rebellion in Gwalior.[49] Iqtidar Alam Khan delineates the organized nature of the sipahis in the rebellion. This contingent was created with the disbandment of a large part of Scindia's force in 1844. As per the arrangement, whereas Scindia provided the resources to maintain it, the unit was under the control of the English, headed by a brigadier. The contingent included people following different religions and also low castes. Its size increased over the 1844–57 period. Khan mentions the presence of other bodies of troops that were present in the territory of Gwalior who participated in the rebellion.

Before the news of the sipahi revolts in Meerut and Delhi reached Gwalior the contingent was efficiently administered and managed. The sipahis had not demonstrated any indication of being affected by the news of the rebellion even after two weeks. They were promised that their positions would be elevated so that they would be at par with those in direct employment. However, the situation altered subsequently.

The sipahis of the Gwalior contingent were organized on the basis of certain specific features. They had their spokesmen and carefully planned out military strategies collectively. The contingent avoided individual desertions and seemed to have preferred to act as a unit. It kept blood-thirsty acts under check after the initial killings of a few officers. Their intention was to force the English officers to leave Gwalior and the cantonments immediately. They attempted to keep the fanatical ones among them under check and prevent them from creating any chaos—a policy that was accepted by the rank and file of the contingent without much opposition.

The idea of announcing the appointment of Inayat Ali as a new commanding officer, with the designation of general, and other officers in high positions was intended to fill up the vacuum and direct the activities of the contingent in an organized manner. These ensured efficient management of the contingent and retaining its fighting capabilities. The contingent also refused to work under Scindia. The sipahis wanted Scindia

to accept their conditions so as to lure him to take the contingent's services to regain the territories that had been lost to the English over the last three decades by his predecessor. This was unacceptable to Scindia who along with his sirdars knew that the English would soon re-establish their authority. Such intervention shows the determination of the sipahis to fight the English. Their decisions were based on collective bodies like the panchayats. Even though differences cropped up among the sipahis, Khan mentions how the contingent took over Kanpur, even though briefly, from British control.

POPULAR PROTEST

In the commencement of 1857 while marching through the Mynpoorie district, my attention was drawn by Zumindars in villages adjoining the road to a mysterious distribution of chuppattees, (or small wheaten cakes), with astonishing rapidity through the country. The bearers knew apparently no more than those from whom they last received the cakes what the purport of the injunction was which directed the preparation of five cakes to be carried on to the villages in advance.... [T]his way the chuppattees or their counterparts travelled often over 160 or 200 miles in a night.

George Harvey, B. C. S., Commissioner of the Agra Division,
cited in J. A. B. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857*, p. 1

It is indeed surprising that the popular dimension of the rebellion has been seriously investigated by very few historians. The contemporary official sources, archival material available from the different provinces, including the hurriedly published documents by different provincial governments under the Freedom Movement series (published in the early years after the independence of India), as well as the oral/folklore traditions associated with 1857 contain major possibilities that can be tapped by researchers. The counter-insurgency operations refer to the ruthless and brutal suppression of the rebellion which included large scale destruction of villages, public hangings, and blowing off people from canons in a desperate effort to restore colonial authority. Historians who have explored the rebellion from the point of view popular participation and subsequently popular protest include Eric Stokes, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, and Tapti Roy.[50] Gautam Bhadra and K. S. Singh have contributed to enrich our understanding of the tribal component involved in 1947.[51] Badri

Narayan, and more recently Rajat Kanta Ray, have captured the imagination, popular culture, and mentalities associated with the 1857 rebellion.[52]

The new spell of research that delved into this area began with Eric Stokes.[53] While Stokes accepts the 'low Muslim rabble' as a strong revolutionary force in the cities and towns like Aligarh, he emphasizes the elitist nature of the rural revolt in 1857 in the upper and central Doab region. To substantiate this argument he studied the peasant masses whose role was minimal and when involved, 'tamely' followed their 'caste superiors'. The dominant castes and communities leading the rebellion represented a small section of the population and those who were landowners were an even smaller group. Stokes attributes the rebellion to caste mobilization. He also stresses the importance of the economic and social dislocations brought in by the British. Thus, the emergence/non-emergence of an 'enterprising' rural magnate proved to be crucial in determining the nature of political allegiance during the rebellion. In areas where they developed, like the Mathura and Aligarh districts, they held down the peasant revolt. Contrarily, in areas where they had failed to develop owing to the absence of major economic and social changes, the old aristocracy held power and led the people into the rebellion.

Stokes develops his arguments in his next work which he did not live to complete.[54] A few of his arguments—that 1857 was not one movement or his emphasis on its diversities and variations—remained unaltered. Nevertheless, some of his positions did change. He did away with his idea that had provided centrality to caste, though his analysis did accept caste as a descriptive category. This resulted primarily due to his detailed work on the Delhi region that he completed after his visit to India in 1975–6. This meant that he directed his attention towards the diverse impact generated by colonialism even when it involved a single caste like Jats, Gujars, and Rajputs. This work goes beyond caste and takes into account inter and intra-regional variations while examining the nature of the rebellion.

Stokes' *The Peasant Armed* does not remain bound by strictly economic explanations and weaves in factors like ecology, culture, and mentalities. Here Stokes shifts focus to the common people and moved towards forms of popular protest during the 1857 rebellion. In fact, the very title of this book marked a shift in the way Stokes located 1857 as a peasant revolt. As shown, large sections of rural society were involved with the

rebellion, though strict categorizations of peasants—like 'rich', 'middle', and 'poor'—were not applicable. Nevertheless, this did not lead Stokes to look at the popular dynamism of the rebellion in regions like Awadh which could have provided deeper insights into this dimension.

Uncovering the dimension of popular peasant protest,[55] Rudrangshu Mukherjee moves away from official accounts and the position of Eric Stokes—including his revised position—that emphasizes the elite nature of the rebellion. Mukherjee examines the linkages between the talukdars and the peasants. Analysing the leadership of the talukdars in the Awadh region, he argues that the real strength of the talukdars' resistance and the 1857 rebellion was based on the general support of the peasantry and the people in the countryside. This solidarity was facilitated by the agrarian relations in the region marked by an inter-dependence of the talukdars and the peasants.

In his effort to explore the popular basis of rebellion, Mukherjee mentions the number of ordinary and common weapons that were recovered, including firearms from ordinary peasants. He extends his argument by citing an official source that mentioned: 'Twenty thousand one hundred and twenty people' had 'taken advantage of the Amnesty and returned to their homes… [though] 200,000 is more likely to represent the number who have actually come in'. He quoted a source which mentioned that '*three fourths of the adult male population of Oudh, had been in rebellion…*'[56]

On the basis of these sources he contests the dominant picture provided by the 'mutiny' literature about the 'magnate leadership'. The peasants did not play a mere rear-guard, subaltern role. They were on the side of the rebellion in areas where the talukdars remained loyal to the British. This illustrates that the rebellion was not always elitist in character and that in Awadh it had a mass, popular base.

The participation and initiatives of the peasantry in the rebellion had a clear sipahi component and explains that the sipahis were peasants in uniform.[57] However, Mukherjee clarifies that this link did not impose a subordinate position on the peasants, for they actually played a decisive influence on many occasions. Whereas the talukdars could and did manage to get pardoned, the mass of the sipahis and the peasants faced the certain risk of being massacred in case they surrendered. These features determined the nature of the rebellion in Awadh, where the opposition

to the alien order of the British was universal and assumed the form of a peoples' resistance.

Tapti Roy explores the countryside in the Bundelkhand region and its relationship with the 1857 rebellion.[58] Here it began by targeting government officials, bankers and mahajans, burning official papers, and 'plundering' neighbouring towns. These symbolized selective targeting and driving out all visible forms of British power with which the peasants had interacted. Therefore, these reflected the negative forms of political assertion which marked the most obvious and widespread form of rural 'jacqueries'.[59] She attributes this to both the knowledge about and the vulnerability of the adversary in a rather volatile context that reinforced the belief about the end of British rule and authority. This could account for the involvement of large numbers of people, sometimes as many as three to four thousand men of different areas (viz. Johurpur, Bainda, Simree, and Wasilpur) who had assembled at Tindwaree on 11 June 1857.

There was a shift in the rebellion after this initial phase. After this the anger of the common people was directed against those associated with colonial power and the internal order of exploitation. Those targeted included the auction-purchasers, decree-holders, merchants, and bankers—people responsible for the disruption and disorder that set in with the advent of colonialism which affected the mass of the people.[60] Roy mentions, after taking over the urban centres the sipahis began their 'attacks' on affluent people. After they left, people from the countryside continued to be involved with this trend, on occasions along with zamindars. This was a symbolic way of displaying power by challenging the contested order. Plunder emerged as a virtual system after the retreat of the British in some areas. This was linked to yet another strand that saw the peasants arming themselves to defend their alternative political order, for which they had chosen 'their king'.

Roy emphasizes the need to recognize rumours as an indication of the strong involvement of common people. Official positions sometimes present a mono-dimensional picture. As an example, she cites the western districts of Lalitpur, Jhansi, and Jalaun, where it was labelled as a rebellion of the thakurs. This was primarily a feature linked to the counter-insurgency operations that gave the thakurs primacy. On the contrary, Roy points to the role of the peasants that slipped into a secondary position, even though both strands strengthened each other and were a part of the rebellion.

Taking note of the intensity of the counter-insurgency operations, Roy weaves in the large-scale desertions of people from their villages in an attempt to explain the intensity of popular participation. The zamindars and peasants set up their own zones and made some rebel leaders, including some from outside their areas, head them. There was unity between peasants and the landed sections against the British who were a common enemy and some sections associated with colonialism. Analysing the enquiries conducted to punish the 'offenders', Roy illustrates the participation of the low castes and the marginal people. She explains the high level of solidarity and mass participation by pointing out the marginality of agricultural production in the Bundelkhand region which was a leveller among the different sections in the village. This posed acute problems and united the peasants and the landlords who faced impoverishment. It was this factor that undermined categories such as 'leaders', 'followers', 'zamindars', and 'peasants' and united diverse sections in the countryside that shaped and expressed rural dissent.

Gautam Bhadra and K. S. Singh study the world of the tribals. Bhadra examines the rebellion in the Chotanagpur region, focusing on Gonoo, a Kol leader.[61] This tract had a pre-history of popular protest and the sipahi element was marginal during 1857. The rebellion began with the sipahis of the Ramgarh battalion. The Kols opposed the sipahis as the latter wanted to appropriate the plundered treasury, whereas the Kols looked at these resources as their own. This context saw traditional rivalries between the chiefs of Kharswan and Porahat surfacing, with the latter playing a confused role and vacillating between the British and the rebels. There emerged strong pressures from below, with the circulation of the arrow that called for rebellion. This transformed the mutiny of the Ramgarh battalion into a popular rebellion of the Kols directed against the British. It saw the emergence of Gonoo, a Kol, as a tribal leader. The rebellion seemed to transgress the framework of the chiefs. However, Bhadra refers to Gonoo who described himself as a 'mere follower of the Rajah (of Singhbhum)' and 'not a leader'. As described, he interprets this not as an attempt to evade responsibility, but a genuine expression of his limitation as a typical Kol rebel of his time.[62]

The complexities of tribal protest went beyond the sipahi component and K. S. Singh examines its forms in the Chotanagpur region, central, and western India.[63] He demonstrates the diversities of the tribal

movements, delving on their specificities. These included efforts not only by sections of the feudal aristocracy, but also by tribals and non-tribals. Besides struggles to restore lost power and rights, these saw the unity of tribals with non-tribals. The tribals also fought against internal exploitation by moneylenders and traders, whose entry into their world was intimately connected with the advent of colonialism. In the essay, Singh explores diverse forms of tribal protests, which included depredations, strategic alliances, and confrontations with the British.

The 1857 rebellion was situated and retained in local traditions, folklores, and popular culture.[64] On the basis of oral evidence, Badri Narayan explores diversities ranging from the perception of the firangi and the folk heroes of the rebellion to the question of popular memory. Throwing light on the fascinating possibilities of oral history, he delineates the way the rebellion captured popular imagination and incorporated popular protest.

The exploration of popular mentalities of the 1857 rebellion, by Rajat Kanta Ray, offers fascinating clues to grasp its spirit and collective cosmology.[65] The sipahis provided the crucial link between town and country, since they were recruited mostly from the countryside. In areas like Bengal and the Punjab they failed to ignite the country and the rebellion did not go beyond the cantonments. Ray explains that the notion of race was an integral component of 1857. The rebellion led to sudden reversals in power relations, with the dominated race rising against the white, English regime. Hindus and Muslims jointly asserted their respective religious creeds and not in terms of a nation asserting its independence from colonial rule. The rebellion was based on patriotism rooted in a spontaneous desire for independence from alien rule. Ray connects this to the people selecting and setting up their kings in some of the storm-centres of the rebellion. Such acts assumed significance since the restored chiefs had to accept the position of the sipahi councils which epitomized peoples' power.

The alternative order that emerged as one that was curiously republican-democratic and which co-existed with a hierarchical, princely structure. After all, argues Ray, the restored feudal chiefships of 1857 were not like the old regimes of the eighteenth century since the rebellion had a mass movement behind it. In terms of collective mentality, 1857 marked a race war against the white oppressors, who formed the master race.

Nevertheless, ideologically this was projected as a struggle between the true religions (viz. Hinduism and Islam) and the false one (viz. Christianity). This did not result due to the efforts to impose the false doctrine of the 'trinity'. Instead, it was related to the question of identity of the 'Hindus and Muslims of Hindustan' that had been threatened by the moral and material aggrandizement of the arrogant imperial power. These features provided the dynamism for a new meaning to the reinstated chiefs of the eighteenth century.

The dialectic of 1857, especially its nature in terms of popular mentalities and their peculiarity are underlined by Ray. It was a war of races, without being race war, since the subject race conceived it as a war of religion. It was a religious war that cannot be categorized entirely in this way, since the rebellion was not directed at the religion of the master race, but its political domination. It was a patriotic war of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood—Ray calls this the 'inchoate social nationality' of Hindustan—but not a national war. Conceptually, it was rooted in the past but groped for an alternative to the technologically advanced British rule. In this sense it was not traditional, but was neither modern. The people involved in the 1857 rebellion felt that it was a 'war' of 'the Hindoostanis' to protect their '*dharma*' and '*deen*' and to 'save the country'. Ray explains that the rebellion did not form a part of the national movement nor can it be seen as the dying 'throes of the old order'.

1857 was a patriotic war, Ray argues, of the people who expressed their sense of national identity through the brotherhood of the two principal religions of a common land. Ideologically it reflected a foetal national community opposed to civil society, with outposts in the enclaves of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Factors of racial subjugation created a sense of oneness that was, however, untainted by ideas of national sovereignty. The rebellion could express itself only through the political vocabulary of restoration that the people were accustomed to. It was marked by a disjunction from the past in the way peoples' power expressed itself through the sipahi councils. Consequently, even while the rebellion failed to generate a new order it was unrecognizable to tradition itself. The white man—and not the rebellion—had turned the world upside down. What was attempted during the rebellion was to turn it back. However, since the old order had been transformed it could never be restored.

Among the latest publications on the 1857 rebellion there has been a special issue of the *Economic and Political Weekly* (henceforth *EPW*).[66] It demonstrates the fascinating possibilities that exist in the 'margins'. Here one can specifically mention Shashank S. Sinha, 'In Search of Alternative Histories of 1857: Witch-hunts, Adivasis, and the Uprising in Chotanagpur'. Investigating the occasioning of mass witch-hunts among the adivasis of Chotanagpur during 1857, Sinha argues that witch-hunts formed a conscious contour of resistance combining both (the obvious) gender and anti-colonial tensions. Badri Narayan's, 'Reactivating the Past: Dalits and Memories of 1857' and Charu Gupta's, 'Dalit Virangas and the Re-invention of 1857', in the issue explore a relatively new dimension of the Dalits and Dalit women in parts of northern India relate to and remember the rebellion in their everyday life and the presence of counter-histories of the rebellion in their memory.

There have also been some fresh efforts to capture the world of cultural representations associated with the rebellion in the *EPW* issue. Aishwarya Lakshmi's, 'The Mutiny Novel: Creating the Domestic Body of the Empire', focuses on what is often referred to as the 'Mutiny novels' while noting the shifts and changes from the earlier period. She emphasizes the re-alignment and re-reading of the late nineteenth century 'adventure novel' within the post-mutiny domestic ideology and figuration of the empire. Indrani Sen's, 'Inscribing the Rani of Jhansi in Colonial "Mutiny" Fiction', probes the diversities of representations and the shifts in fictional works of the period. She argues that the strategic importance of this literary genre and its enormous popularity can be traced to post-'Mutiny' insecurities and anxieties and the need to present epic narratives of British heroics and the solidarity of colonizers. Alongside, Swarupa Gupta's, '1857 and Ideas about Nationhood in Bengal: Nuances and Themes', studies the uniqueness of the Bengali regional representation of an iconic 'national' event. She emphasizes that the location of 1857 in history was crucial in the grounding of nationhood.

And, finally, Lata Singh's, 'Visibilizing the "Other" in History: Courtesans and 1857 Revolt', brings to life the performing community of courtesans. Thus *tawaif,* the term used for the courtesan, has value-loaded connotations and is often equated to a whore, marginalizing these women performers into silence. By negotiating the courtesan through a modern play *Azizun Nisa San Sattavan ka Kissa* ('A courtesan and the 1857

Revolt':1999) written by Tripurari Sharma, Singh touches a dimension left untouched by social historians and feminist scholars. She argues, that the significance of the play is not just in retrieving the courtesans who were denied agency or a presence by the colonial project of misrepresentations, but also in bringing them back into the creative domain.

COMPREHENDING THE REBELLION

The 1857 rebellion was a major anti-colonial movement and is comparable to the Taiping Movement that shook China around the same phase. The rebellion symbolized resistance against the aggression of imperialist policies over the first half of the nineteenth century. It needs to be stressed that 1857 was not based only on 'economic' factors and that it was a mass political struggle. Besides shaking the foundations of colonial rule in large parts of northern India, the vibrations of the rebellion were felt elsewhere too. The rebellion inspired later anti-colonial imagination and movements. The significant presence of the landed sections in the rebellion however undermined its social transformative content.

There were risings by sipahis prior to 1857. For example, in Vellore during July 1806, Indian sipahis had revolted against the East India Company's garrison. 'Order' was restored very soon and this revolt did not go beyond the confines of the cantonment. Such mutinies were set in a context of the growing resentment against imperialism over the first half of the nineteenth century owing to its large-scale economic and political interventions.

Some historians like S. B. Chaudhuri suggest that 1857 had two distinct strands—the military rising and the mass rebellion. The methodological problem of this position is that it does not view historical processes holistically. Thus, this point would be difficult to sustain if the background of 1857 is kept in mind. Besides, it needs to be stressed that the sipahi, who was a 'peasant in uniform', articulated the problems and anxieties of the countryside. He provided the crucial link between both these components. This issue can be resolved in a serious manner in case more research is directed towards local studies that exploring popular participation and protest.

A point that needs some elaboration is the emphasis given to the religious angle and the so called 'clash of cultures' during the rebellion, echoes of which are strangely heard even today. It is here that one needs to

examine the position of K. M. Ashraf on the Wahabis. Did the 'Muslim'—a rather nebulous label—always follow the preacher or more specifically the Wahabi leaders? In fact, in a recent unpublished paper Iqtidar Alam Khan shows that many of the people clubbed together by Ashraf as Wahabis included Sufis. Secondly, he demonstrates the complexities involved in the interactions between the Wahabis and the English over the first half of the nineteenth century, which oscillated between collaboration and confrontation and was not based on opposition alone. Finally, Khan reveals how the meaning of jehad—'religious war'—has been misunderstood since in the context of the rebellion it meant a 'just war' against imperialism.[67]

In studies of popular participation, the formulations of subaltern historians like Ranajit Guha and Gautam Bhadra have been revised. Guha refers to the territoriality component in 1857, which saw peasants remaining confined to their local boundaries. Tapti Roy's work contradicts this assertion. She demonstrates that the peasants not only moved to urban centres but also welcomed rebels from outside their immediate areas as their leaders. This feature of participation is also applicable to the adivasi tracts and in fact K. S. Singh refers to the unity of the tribals and non-tribals. Further, Gautam Bhadra's acceptance of the Kol leader Gonoo's version—that he was not a leader but a simple follower of the Rajah of Singhbhum—after his arrest illustrates the simplistic and elitist approaches often employed in the studies of adivasis.

The basic thrust of the 1857 rebellion was directed against the colonial regime though various categories directly associated with the rebellion emerged after its entry into northern India. Thus, the rebellion was against not only the planters and colonial officials, but also the buniyas and moneylenders who represented the internal order of exploitation. Moreover, the adivasi struggles in this phase went beyond those of the sipahis. This area has not received significant attention from historians considering that the world of the adivasis had a history of major movements prior to 1857. One needs to mention here some of the adivasi rebellions, conventionally called the Kol and the Santal rebellion, in the immediate background of 1857.[68] Besides, there is a need to unveil the problems related to the ill-treatment and sexual exploitation of adivasi women, which seem to have links with some of these rebellions. Similarly the over-emphasis on sipahis like Mangal Pandey blurs the role of the outcastes and low castes in the cantonments as well as outside. Studies

on these aspects would enable us to bring to light some specificities of the popular struggles of the adivasis, outcaste and low caste groups and gender-related issues in the 1857 rebellion.[69] This would help in unravelling the fascinating complexities of the struggle not only against imperialism, but also against the internal structure of oppression and exploitation—vital elements in the understanding of colonial Indian social history.

NOTES

1. To get an idea about these dimensions see Bipan Chandra *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1999; Irfan Habib, 'The Coming of 1857', in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 26: Nos 1–4, January-April, 1998, pp. 6–15; Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004; and Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States: The New Cambridge History of India, III, 6*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

2. The bulk of the research on 1857 is unfortunately bound by this 'mapping'; in fact, the actual picture could be very different if some effort was directed to work on the diverse regions of India on the basis of local repositories. For example, N. Rajendran, 'Upsurge in South', *Frontline*, 29 June 2007, pp. 19–22, shows the way the rebellion affected parts of south India; similarly, my on-going research on Orissa shows the vibrancy of the rebellion, leading to large-scale guerilla warfare in western Orissa.

3. In fact, the taking over of India by the Crown in 1858 symbolized this shift.

4. See for example, Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India; and a Concise History of the Great Military Events which have tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan*, 2 Volumes, London: The London Printing and Publishing Co., 1858–9 and John William Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857–58*, 3 Volumes; London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1864–76; reprinted, Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1988.

5. Quoted in George Earl Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. IV, London: John Murray, 1916, p. 91.

6. Cited in K. K. Datta, *Reflections on the Mutiny*, Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1967, pp. 11–12.

7. Syed Ahmad Khan, *An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India*, J. A. Gibbons, Meerut, 1860.

8. See Syed Ahmad Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (*Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind*), Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

9. Most of the accounts seem to have been fabricated because special commissioners appointed later to investigate reports of rape and torture failed to come up with evidence.

10. As Dickens put it, 'I wish I were Commander-in-Chief in India...I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested; and...raze it off the face of the Earth', cited in Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 207. Lillian Nayder, 'Class Consciousness and the Indian Mutiny in Dickens' "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners", *Studies in English Literature*, 32, (1992), pp. 689–705, argues that Dickens appealed to the racial hatred generated by the Indian Mutiny in order to solve the problem of class conflict and alienation in the British 'rank and file' (viz. working class), cited in Laura Peters, '"Double-dyed Traitors and Infernal Villains": Illustrated London News, Household Words, Charles Dickens and the Indian rebellion' in David Finkelstein and Douglas M. Peers, *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth Century Media*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.

11. Ernest Jones, *The Revolt of Hindoostan; or, The New World*, London: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, 1857.

12. Karl Marx, *The New-York Daily Tribune*, 22 July, 1853, in Marx and Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857–1859*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 34, 1975. This collection of the essays, written as short newspaper pieces, articulate a serious critique of British imperialism, even as they capture different aspects of the 1857 Movement.

13. For details see Marx and Engels, *The First Indian War*.

14. An Indian Nationalist (V. D. Savarkar), *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*, London, 1909 (subsequently reprinted under his name, Calcutta: R. Bhattacharya, 1930), p. 6; see 'The Volcano', especially pp. 3–55. Khan, *The Causes* also saw 1857 being precipitated by 'many grievances [that] had been rankling the hearts of the people'; p. 3.

15. M. N. Roy with the collaboration of Abani Mukherji, *India in Transition*, Genève: J. B. Target, 1922, pp. 1–2.

16. R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, Calcutta: Manisha, 1970, (originally published by Victor Golancs Ltd. 1940), 195, p. 306.

17. R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963; S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil rebellion in the Indian Mutinies, 1857–59*, Calcutta: The World Press, 1957 and *Theories of the Indian Mutiny*, Calcutta: The World Press, 1965; S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, New Delhi: Publication Division, 1957; and, K. K. Datta, *Reflections on the Mutiny*.

18. For a survey of this dimension see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983

and Biswamoy Pati, 'Popular Movements among Peasants, Tribals, Artisans and Workers: 1850–1900' in *The Emergence of Organised Nationalism 2*, New Delhi: Unit of The Indira Gandhi National Open University, 1989.

19. P. C. Joshi ed., *1857: A Symposium*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1957. This collection incorporates very few tracts from this volume primarily since it has been reprinted in 2007 (New Delhi: National Book Trust) and due to the constraints of space; see also P. C. Joshi ed. *1857 in Folk Songs*, New Delhi, 1994.

20. C. A. Bayly, Rulers, *Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; Amar Farooqui, 'From Baiza Bai to Lakshmi Bai: The Scindia State in the Early Nineteenth Century and the Roots of 1857', in Biswamoy Pati ed., *Issues in Modern Indian History: For Sumit Sarkar*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2000.

21. Eric Stokes, *Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Peasant Society and Agrarian rebellion in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1978; and his *The Peasant Armed: The India Revolt of 1857*, (with an editorial note by C. A. Bayly), Oxford: Clarendon Press,1986; Guha, *Elementary Aspects*.

22. Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The Gwalior Contingent in 1857–58: A Study of the Organisation and Ideology of the Sepoy Rebels,' *Social Scientist*, 26: 1–4 January–April 1998, pp. 53–75.

23. Gautam Bhadra, 'Four Rebels of Eighteen Fifty-Seven', in Ranajit Guha, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 229–75, he also discussed the Kol participation in the rebellion; and Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, 'Profile of a Saintly Rebel—Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah' in *Social Scientist*, 26: 1–4, January–April 1998, pp. 39–52.

24. Talmiz Khaldun, 'The Great rebellion' in Joshi ed., *1857*, pp. 1–70 and E. I. Brodkin, 'The Struggle for Succession: Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857', in *Modern Asian Studies*, 1972, pp. 6, 277–90.

25. Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, pp. 16, 21, 22, 25–7, 51–2, 71, 95, 103–6, 138. Guha's greatest limitation was his effort to 'confine' the jacqueries to local boundaries; 308.

26. See for example, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt, 1857–58: A Study of Popular Resistance*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984 and Tapti Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

27. K. S. Singh, 'The "Tribals" and the 1857 Uprising', Social Scientist, 26: 1–4 January–April, 1998, pp. 76–85; Shashank Shekhar Sinha, 'Dynamics of 1857 in a Region: Chotanagpur Revisited', Proceedings of an Indian Council of Historical Research Conference on 'Historiography of 1857: Debates in the Past and the Present State of Knowledge', New Delhi, 9–10 December, 2006 (unpublished; hereafter ICHR Conference Proceedings).

28. Badri Narayan, 'Dalits and Memories of 1857', ICHR Conference Proceedings.

29. This trend which had begun with Joshi ed. *1857 in Folk Songs* continued with Badri Narayan, 'Popular Culture and 1857: Memory Against Forgetting', *Social Scientist*, 26: 1–4 January–April, 1998, who drew upon popular culture to delineate fascinating possibilities related to the rebellion; 86–94.

30. Rajat Kanta Ray, *The Felt Community: Commonalty and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

31. The pioneer here was E. I. Brodkin, 'The Struggle for Succession: Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857', *Modern Asian Studies*, 6, 3, 277–90, 1972; Iqbal Hussain, 'The Rebel Administration in Delhi' and Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The Gwalior Contingent in 1857–58: A Study of the Organisation and Ideology of the Sepoy Rebels,' *Social Scientist*, 26: 1–4, 1998, 25–38 and 53–75, respectively, also focus on this dimension.

32. For images of rape in 'Mutiny' accounts and fiction one can specifically refer to Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993 and Indrani Sen, *Woman and Empire: Respresentations in the Writings of British India (1858–1900)*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002; see also Nancy Paxton, *Writing Under the Raj: Gender, Race and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830–1947*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

33. Chaudhuri, *Civil rebellion*, p. 284, cites Records of the Intelligence Department to prove his argument.

34. The discussion here weaves in Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 33–40 and Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, Vol. I, 487–96.

35. According to one of the 'codes' of the caste system, crossing the sea implied the loss of one's caste status; this was obviously not something that had any serious historical basis seen in the context of the sea-faring communities and maritime trade in pre-colonial India.

36. It is of course another matter that during the 'Mutiny' the rebels continued to use the greased cartridges while fighting the Company troops.

37. Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770–1830*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 259–63; 294–95, touches upon these points as well.

38. Alavi, The *Sepoys*, p. 296.

39. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, Chaudhuri, *Civil rebellion* and *Theories of the Indian Mutiny*, Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* and Datta, *Reflections*.

40. This is based on Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, Book 4, chapter 11, pp. 383–432.

41. This part weaves in Chaudhuri, *Civil rebellion*, Chapter 6, pp. 258–99.

42. The discussion here is based on Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, chapter 11, 'A Review', pp. 398–418.

43. This part draws upon Datta, *Reflections*, pp. 1–23; in fact K. K. Datta, *Anti-British Plots and Movements Before 1857*, Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1970, was written as a follow-up of his major work, *Reflections* to contour the pre-1857, anti-British movements.

44. This is a rather well documented point in most of the official accounts.

45. Talmiz Khaldun, 'The Great rebellion', in Joshi ed. *1857: A Symposium*; this part draws upon pp. 36–44.

46. This point has been discussed earlier.

47. This part weaves in K. M. Ashraf, 'Muslim Revivalists and the Revolt of 1857', in Joshi ed. *1857*, pp. 86–90.

48. Ashraf, 'Muslim Revivalists', p. 71.

49. The discussion here is based on Khan, 'The Gwalior Contingent', pp. 53–75.

50. Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj*, Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt* and Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*.

51. Gautam Bhadra, 'Four Rebels of Eighteen Fifty Seven', especially pp. 256–63, since I have only included his sketch of the Kol leader Gonoo; and Singh, 'The "Tribals" and the 1857 Uprising'.

52. Badri Narayan, 'Popular Culture and 1857'; Rajat K. Ray, *The Felt Community*, especially chapter 4, pp. 353–534.

53. The discussion here incorporates Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj*, Chapter 8, pp. 185–204.

54. This portion weaves in C. A. Bayly's 'Concluding Note', from Bayly ed., Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, that focuses on the dimension of popular protest; pp. 226–43.

55. Based on Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, pp. 157–70.

56. Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, p. 166; emphasis Mukherjee's.

57. Trying to explain the motives of the peasants that created the basis of popular protest, Mukherjee mentioned the removal of the talukdars and the problems posed by the new revenue demands, which caused insecurities and anxieties. These were reinforced by the removal of the king and the range of fears about religion and caste, together with the imposition of British rule that created fears and anger among the entire agrarian population. It led to apprehensions about the collapse of the traditional order of inter-dependence between the ruler and the peasants and issues related to the moral economy of the peasant.

58. The discussion here is based on Roy, *The Politics*, pp. 218–47.

59. Jacquerie refers to popular peasant revolts in France; here Roy uses the term to indicate the popular basis of the peasant movements in the Bundelkhand region during the 1857 Movement.

60. The auctioneers and decree holders refer to the people who had emerged as landholders through auctioning of land when the owners who held them failed to pay their taxes and the courts were involved in settling disputes by issuing decrees. The anger against the merchants was related to moneylending, with high interest rates.

61. The discussion here is based on Bhadra, 'Four Rebels', pp. 256–63.

62. This is a rather elitist position since Bhadra takes for granted the naivety of Gonoo.

63. The discussion here weaves in Singh, 'The "tribals"', pp. 76–85.

64. This part draws upon Narayan, 'Popular Culture', pp. 86–94.

65. Here the discussion weaves in Rajat Kanta Ray, *The Felt Community*, pp. 353–60.

66. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLll: 19, May 12–18, 2007, hereafter *EPW* Special Issue; due to constraints of space only a few of the articles have been discussed here.

67. Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The Wahabis in 1857 Revolt: Brief Appraisal of their Role', ICHR Conference Proceedings.

68. I am referring here to the Santal rebellion of 1855–6.

69. The association between the 1857 rebellion and gender-related issues have been taken up, as discussed, by the *EPW* Special Issue.

PART I

Sepoy Mutiny

The History of the Indian Mutiny*

CHARLES BALL

[...] The religion prevalent among the sepoys of the Bengal army, must necessarily be referred to in connection with events that have rendered it a prominent feature in their history. Brahminism and Mohammedanism have both their headquarters within the extensive provinces of Bengal—the former among the fertile plains and settled populations of the provinces along the course of the sacred Ganges; the latter in the higher portions of the country in which the Moslem invader originally established his empire: but neither faith has ever pervaded the whole of India. In the presidencies of Madras and Bombay, the older worships of the aboriginal or immigrant populations exist to this time, and are adhered to by more than sixteen millions of people. The consequence is, that the native armies of those presidencies are comparatively but little affected by religious questions; while that of Bengal, recruited for the most part from the very cradle of Brahminism, and principally composed of its two superior castes, has demanded, and obtained, a consideration for religious scruples, which gradually had impaired its discipline, and, ultimately, has led to its destruction.

The Brahmin sepoy, springing from a class which regards the profession of a soldier as only second in honour to that of a priest, occupies a position infinitely superior in pay, and all material comforts, to the native cultivator or the mechanic. In the field and in cantonment, he has been treated by his English employers, not merely on a par with, but, in many points,

*Previously published as Chapter One in Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny 1857–58*, New Delhi, Master Publishers, 1981 (first published, London, 1885). This is an extract from the chapter. In the present version, some portions of the text and notes have been removed. For the complete text see the original version.

with superior consideration to that accorded to the European soldier in the same service. Indulged with regular furloughs to visit the shrines of his deities or the home of his family; entitled, as of unquestioned right, to a decoration for meritorious service; rising by seniority to preferment; and, finally, assured of a competent provision on retirement—no private soldier in the world enjoyed the advantages of his profession to the same extent, or with so few of its discomforts, as the Bengal sepoy. It is true, that through years of arduous struggle and well-fought campaigns, he has evinced his sense of the advantages of his position, by faithful service and a noble emulation of European heroism. But great as the loyalty—signal as the valour of the native armies of India has been since their first organization and submission to British rule—instances of mutiny and desertion have not been wanting in their history. Occasionally, a question of pay or provisions has supplied the motive for insubordination; but the most frequent and formidable ground of discontent has been that which presents itself at the present crisis, namely, a suspicion of meditated interference with the inviolable immunities of their faith and the privileges of their caste. Notwithstanding this, however, for part of the last century the confidence of the Anglo-Indian government in the loyalty of its native troops has been implicit. [It] was but natural, therefore, that as territory became progressively acquired, and necessity arose for an augmentation of troops for its protection, that the native element should be largely absorbed in the consolidation of military strength. The result has followed, that, by degrees, the single battalion of Clive, in 1757, had swollen and spread over the country until, at the commencement of 1857, it was represented, in the presidency of Bengal alone, by an armament of upwards of 1,50,000 men, divided into seventy-four regiments of foot, and eleven of light cavalry; four troops of horse artillery, and two battalions of six companies each, of foot artillery: this force being further augmented by irregular troops, to the extent of twenty-three regiments of cavalry, seven battalions of Sikh infantry, and upwards of twenty other corps of various arms. This vast military establishment was again increased by the contingents of several native states, raised for local service in Assam, the Punjab, Nagpore, and Oude. The whole European force acting with, and, to a great extent, looked up to as giving a tone to the military spirit of this vast mass of heterogeneous material, as regards races and creeds, consisted, in January, 1857, of thirteen regiments of infantry and two of cavalry, belonging to the English government; and three regiments of

infantry, three brigades of horse, and six battalions of foot artillery, in the service of the East India Company. This force was distributed in about a hundred military stations, over a tract of country stretching from the mouth of the Ganges to Afghanistan, and from the Himalayas to Nagpore; equalling in extent, and greatly exceeding in the numerical amount of its population, the united territories of France, Austria, and Prussia.

An unfortunate recognition of the privileges of caste, by the Anglo-Indian government, at the commencement of its triumphs, has, doubtless, in a very great degree, encouraged the isolated pride and religious prejudices of the high-caste sepoys, of whom the bulk of the Bengalese army consisted; and a dread of interfering with the visible mysteries of their idolatrous faith, has led from time to time to concessions and indulgences that were at last looked upon as the rightful privilege of their order, to the serious obstruction of military duty, and the lax enforcement of proper discipline. The inconvenience resulting from this state of the Bengal army, at length rendered it expedient that a stop should be put to further concessions, and that, in some minor instances, the privileges already enjoyed should be curtailed, if not entirely withdrawn; thus, the dâk letters of sepoys, that had hither to passed free of postage-tax, became chargeable. Tolls were exacted when they travelled, although formerly they had been exempt from the imposition of them, and they were deprived of the privilege they had enjoyed of purchasing their provisions in the markets at a lower price than other consumers. The sepoys had also been granted the right to choose whether they would, or would not, go beyond sea on active service; and this most inconvenient and dangerous discretionary power was sought to be withdrawn. Promotion among them, which had gone by seniority, without reference to merit or ability, and which, moreover, was in a great degree subject to the dictation of the men themselves, was also to be henceforth in the hands of the military authorities only. The pride of caste, which had been absurdly encouraged for the purpose of conciliating the people and recruiting the ranks of the army, it was now found necessary in some measure to discourage; the preponderance of Hindoos in the army having become so great, that in some of the regiments of 1,000 men, from six to seven hundred were Brahmins, combining the priestly with the military character, and exercising peculiar influences over the minds of their comrades of inferior caste. The European officers attached to the native regiments, had seen their power to control by the enforcement of discipline, gradually reduced,

until even trivial questions connected with regimental duty, could only be settled by a reference to headquarters, or to the supreme council at the seat of government. Officers in charge of companies had little, if any, power to punish or reward their own men; and the colonel had as little power to promote, or punish, in the regiment under his command, and, consequently, was without that summary and effective control over his men that the efficiency of military discipline requires: besides these disadvantages, not more than two or three of the whole staff of European officers attached to each native regiment, were able to speak or understand the language of the men they commanded; who were necessarily accustomed to look to their native officers of the same or higher caste than themselves for direction and guidance, while their European officers were regarded with indifference, and obeyed only mechanically. These several causes operating together, through a period of some years' duration, and being strengthened by the adverse influence of the agents of the *Dhurma Sobha*, a Hindoo association, established at Calcutta for the avowed purpose of defending the religious customs of Brahminism from encroachments by the government, had at length rendered the sepoy arrogant, self-sufficient, and independent of his officers; and the evil has been encouraged, and the men petted, until, as in the case of spoiled children whom parental authority lacked nerve or resolution to correct, the mischief grew into a settled habit, and its eradication from the system became a work of great difficulty and of danger. There can be no doubt, also, that a species of fanaticism was largely auxiliary in working up the real, or assumed, grievances of the native troops to the dangerous magnitude they had acquired.

It has been remarked by a high military authority in India, 'that in the Bengal army there is a constant studying of many castes, which *the European appears to think as much of, and to esteem as high, as do the natives themselves;* and the sepoys, instead of looking on the European officers as superior beings, are compelled to consider them as bad Hindoos!' Instead of being taught to pride themselves on their soldiership and discipline, the sepoys are trained to pride themselves on their absurdities of caste, and think that their power and value are best shown by refusing to obey any orders which they please to say do not accord with their religious prejudices. It is a grave mistake to suppose that religious feelings have any real influence on these occasions; it is a mistake, which would be ridiculous if its consequences were not so serious; but it is certain that the Bengal sepoy is

a stickler for his imaginary *rights of caste, for the sake of increased power*: he knows well that government never intends any insult to his creed, however, absurd it may be; but he knows that, by crying out about his caste, he keeps the power in his hands, saves himself from many of the hardships of service, and makes his officers afraid of him. This is proved by what takes place in the armies of India. In the army of Bombay, even a Purwarree may, and does, often rise to the rank of subahdar by his own merit: in Bengal such a man would not even be admitted into the ranks, for fear of his contaminating those fine gentlemen the Brahmins; yet, in the Bombay army, the Brahmin (father, brother, or son may be, of him of Bengal) stands shoulder to shoulder in the ranks—nay, sleeps in the same tent with his Purwarree fellow-soldier, and dreams not of any objection to the arrangement. If this subject be mentioned to a Bombay Brahmin sepoy—as it is, sometimes, by Bengal officers—the ready answer is, "What do I care? Is he not the soldier of the state?" The reply speaks volumes, and shows a state of affairs which the officers of the Bengal army cannot conceive.'

[...]

At Dumdum, an artillery station about eight miles from Calcutta, a depôt had been established for the instruction of native troops in the use of the Enfield rifle, the cartridge for which is made with a different material from that used in preparing the case of the ordinary cartridge, and is required to be greased.[1] To touch or taste the fat of animals, is, to the Hindoo, defilement, and loss of caste is the inevitable consequence. The offender becomes an outcast, and disinheritance follows; for the Brahminical law says, 'No outcast can inherit property.' This is, however, a British as well as a Hindoo law: for it was enacted by the 21st George III, cap. 70, 'That inheritance in the case of Gentoos (Hindoos) shall be determined by the laws and usages of Gentoos.' Another effect of the forbidden act is excommunication, such as formerly was practised among Christians, but carried to a point of infinitely greater severity. The intercourse of a sepoy so circumstanced, even with his wife or family, is visited, according to Hindoo law, by mutilation and death. The stain inflicted is, in some cases, capable of being removed from the family of the offender by a series of penances, that are crowned by passing over a burning mass of red-hot charcoal, nine yards square, and twenty-nine inches deep, vehemently fanned during the operation; and this purgation can be accomplished on one day of the year only.

In the month of January, 1857, a workman of the lowest caste (a sudra attached to the magazine at Dumdum), asked a Brahmin sepoy of the 2nd grenadiers to give him water from his 'lotha' (a small brass pot for drinking from); the sepoy refused the favour, on the ground of his superior caste, and because his 'lotha' would be defiled by the touch of the sudra: the latter, incensed by the refusal, observed, that 'the pride of caste would soon be brought low; for the sepoy would presently have to bite cartridges covered with the fat of cows and pigs!'—the former animal being an object of special veneration; the latter of abhorrence and hatred. The Brahmin soldier reported the language of the sudra to his high-caste comrades in the barrack, by whom it was listened to with disgust and indignation, and the alarm quickly spread through the depôt. Intelligence of the occurrence having reached the ears of the officer in command, the native troops were paraded, and asked if they had any complaint to make? Upon this, the whole of the non-commissioned officers, and the larger portion of the men, stepped to the front, and stated their objection to the new cartridge; respectfully suggesting the use of a substitute in the making-up, that would not interfere with the peculiarities of their religion, and render them liable to the deprivation of caste. The appeal of the men, thus urged, was listened to by the colonel in command of the depôt, and immediately reported to headquarters; and upon the representation of General Hearsey, then commanding the presidency division—who remarked, that 'though totally groundless, it would be most difficult to eradicate the impression from the minds of the native soldiers, who are always suspiciously disposed when any change of this sort affecting themselves is introduced'—the required concession was promptly made by order of government. The colonel was also authorised to procure from the bazaar unobjectionable ingredients for greasing the cartridges, and the men were to be permitted to make them up themselves in their quarters, that they might be satisfied there was no desire to interfere with their prejudices.

By a despatch dated February 7th, the governor-general in council informed the directors of the East India Company of the display of feeling on the part of the sepoys, relative to the use of grease for the cartridges. [...]

At the suggestion of the inspector-general of ordnance, we beg to recommend to your honourable court that no more ready-made ammunition for the Enfield rifles be sent to this presidency.

The directors, in reply, expressed their entire approval of this order, and added, 'no more cartridges will be sent from this country. In making them up in India, there will not, we are persuaded, be any difficulty in your prescribing a composition which, whilst sufficient for the purpose, will be unobjectionable to any of the castes in our native army.'

But while matters seemed thus to be progressing satisfactorily at Dumdum, another cause of dissatisfaction, arising from an alleged design of the English government to Christianize by compulsion the entire native army, had shown itself in operation at the military station of Barrackpore,[2] near Calcutta. The first indications of an unquiet feeling were shown by incendiary fires, that broke out in various parts of the cantonment, and by one of which the telegraph station was purposely destroyed.

Contemporaneously with these transactions, a singular, and, at the time, incomprehensible, incident occurred at Cawnpore,[3] a town in the north-western division of the presidency of Bengal; which occasioned much surmise, and no inconsiderable degree of apprehension. It was reported to the authorities, that the chowkeydars, or village policemen, were speeding from Cawnpore through the villages and towns of the peninsula, distributing on their way a symbol, of the origin of which no European could at the time form an intelligible idea, or conjecture the purpose. The manner of effecting this singular movement—which later events have shown to be somewhat analogous to that of the Fire-cross of our own Highland clans in earlier times—was as follows: One of the chowkeydars of Cawnpore ran to another in Futteghur, the next village, and placing in his hands two *chupatties* (small unleavened cakes about the size of a gingerbread-nut, and similar in composition to the ordinary food of the poorer classes), directed him to make ten more of the same kind, and give two of them to each of the five nearest chowkeydars, with instructions to perform the same service. He was obeyed; and in a few hours the whole country was in a state of excitement, through these policemen running from village to village with their cakes. The wave spread over the provinces with a velocity of speed never yet equalled by the bearers of government despatches. The English officials in the districts through which this extraordinary and mysterious operation progressed with the rapidity of light, were bewildered; some of the messengers were arrested, and themselves and the cakes examined by the magistrates and superior police, who looked at, handled, and tasted the latter, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion respecting them. The chowkeydars professed

to be ignorant of the source whence they originated, or of the object in view by their transmission and distribution over the country, which they believed to be by the order of government. The magistrates thereupon reported the occurrence as a strange but harmless affair;[4] and no further notice was taken by those in authority, nor does it appear that any subsequent effort was made to discover the object of the parties with whom the movement originated. [...]

Another incident had then recently occurred, that, viewed in possible connection with the above mysterious affair, might reasonably have generated suspicion of impending evil. It had been made known to the government that early in January, an incendiary address, written in Hindostani, was placarded at Madras, calling upon 'all true believers to rise against the English infidels, and drive them from India. It declared that the English had now abandoned all principles of justice, and were bent on appropriating the possessions of the Mohammedans, and that there was but one way of resisting their encroachments—a holy war! He who fell in such war would be venerated as a martyr. He that held back would be execrated as an infidel and a heretic.' As a proof that the smouldering fires of the volcano were not yet apparent to the authorities, the Indian journals of January and February describe the whole country at that time as 'profoundly tranquil.'

On the 17th of the same month, the tranquility into which Oude had subsided since its annexation, was broken in upon in consequence of a Maulavi, named Sekunder Shah, arriving with some armed followers at Lucknow, and preaching war against the infidels; at the same time distributing proclamations calling upon the faithful, and even the Hindoos, to arise, or be for ever fallen. The Maulavi and his people were arrested after a conflict, in which Lieutenant Thomas, of the 22nd regiment of native infantry, and four sepoys, were wounded; and three persons were killed, and five wounded, belonging to the seditious preacher, himself being among the latter.

Whatever may have been the positive, long cherished, but hidden grievance of the native soldiers, it is more than possible that the alleged insult offered by the greased cartridges, and the dread of conversion to Christianity, gave the main impulse that roused the discontented spirit of the troops into mischievous activity. On the 6th of February, 1857, a jemadat (lieutenant) of the 34th regiment of native infantry, stationed

at Barrackpore, disclosed to his colonel some proceedings in which he had taken part on the preceding night, and which afforded ample ground for believing that the sepoys contemplated an outbreak—during which they intended to kill the European officers at the station, and, after plundering it, to destroy the place, and retire towards Delhi. The communication was duly reported to the general commanding the district, but no serious notice appears to have been taken of it at the time.

[...]

NOTES

1. The subjoined description of the obnoxious cartridges has been furnished by an officer of the Madras army. He says—'The cartridge used with the Enfield Pritchett-rifle consists of a piece of lead called a ball, one inch in length, and rather more than a quarter of an inch in diameter at the base, which is concave, the point being convex. This fits so closely to the inside of the rifle, that the whole force of the powder being expended at the concave end, produces a slight expansion filling the grooves and effectually preventing a windage, or loss of the exploding power. In consequence of this it has been found necessary to have one end of the cartridge, which is $2^1/_2$ inches in length, greased for three-quarters of an inch, the object of which is simply to lubricate the bore and prevent the adhesion of any portion of the lead to the groove. Indeed, the rifle would be useless without it. In using this cartridge it is necessary to bite off the end as heretofore, and pour in the powder; but instead of tearing the greased part, the cartridge is reversed when put into the barrel, and forced down three-quarters of an inch to the point where the grease terminates, the remaining part of the cartridge being torn off, so that it is not necessary for the fingers to come into contact with it at all. I say this from experience.'

2. Barrackpore is an irregular-built town, or station, on the eastern bank of the Hooghly, sixteen miles above Calcutta.

3. Cawnpore, is the capital of a district of the same name, in the province of Allahabad.

4. The following official letter endeavours to explain the mystery, but leaves it very much as it originally stood:

(No. 68 of 1857.)

'From Major W. C. Erskine, Commissioner, Saugor Division, to C. B. Thornhill, Esq., Officiating Secretary to Government, North-West Province, Agra.

Jubbulpore, 5th March, 1857.

1. Sir,—Observing in the *Mofuscilite* newspaper of the 27th ult. a notice of certain small baked cakes of atta having been distributed, through the chowkeydars of certain districts, in

the North-West Provinces for some unknown purpose, I have the honour to report that the same signal has passed, in the same way, through the districts of Saugor, Dumah, Jubbulpore, and Nursingpore, in my division.

2. I first heard of it in Nursingpore, and on making official inquiries, found that it had extended to other districts, and although the deputy-commissioners have used their best endeavours to find out the purport, nothing has yet been discovered beyond the fact of the spread of the cakes, and the general belief that such distribution, passed on from village to village, will prevent hail falling, and keep away sickness.

3. I also understand that this practice is adopted by 'dyers' when their dye will not clear properly; and the impression is, that these cakes originally came from Scindia's or the Bhopal States.

4. Certain it is that no attempts were made at concealment, several of the kotewars, or chowkeydars, having brought the cakes to the deputy-commissioners.

5. Inquiries are still being made, and should any further information on the subject be received, I will inform the government.

6. There appears to have been no harm intended, and I inclose one of the cakes in question.

I have, &c.,

W. C. Erskine, Commissioner,

Jubbulpore Commissioner's Office, 3rd March, 1857'

A History of the Sepoy War in India*

J. W. KAYE

[...] For years the enemies of the English, all who had been alarmed by our encroachments, all who had suffered by our usurpations, all who had been shorn by our intervention of privileges and perquisites which they had once enjoyed, and who saw before them a still deeper degradation and a more absolute ruin, had been seeking just such an opportunity as now rose up suddenly before them. They had looked for it in one direction; they had looked for it in another; and more than once they thought that they had found it. They thought that they had found something, of which advantage might be taken to persuade the Native soldiery that their Christian masters purposed to defile their caste and to destroy their religion. But the false steps, which we had hitherto taken, had not been false enough to serve the purposes of those who had sought to destroy the British Government by means of a general revolt of the Native Army. For half a century there had been nothing of a sufficiently palpable and comprehensive character to alarm the whole Sepoy Army, Mahomedan and Hindoo. But now, suddenly, a story of most terrific import found its way into circulation. It was stated that Government had manufactured cartridges, greased with animal fat, for the use of the Native Army; and the statement was not a lie.

The old infantry musket, the venerable Brown Bess of the British soldier, had been condemned as a relic of barbarism, and it was wisely determined, in the Indian as in the English Army, to supersede it by the

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issue of an improved description of fire-arm, with grooved bores, after the fashion of a rifle. As a ball from these new rifled muskets reached the enemy at a much greater distance than the ammunition of the old weapon, the Sepoy rejoiced in the advantage which would thus be conferred upon him in battle, and lauded the Government for what he regarded as a sign both of the wisdom of his rulers and of their solicitude for his welfare. And when it was learnt that depôts had been established at three great military stations for the instruction of the Sepoy in the use of the new weapon, there was great talk in the Lines about the wonderful European musket that was to keep all comers at a distance. But, unhappily, these rifled barrels could not be loaded without the lubrication of the cartridge. And the voice of joy and praise was suddenly changed into a wild cry of grief and despair when it was bruited abroad that the cartridge, the end of which was to be bitten off by the Sepoy, was greased with the fact of the detested swine of the Mahomedan, or the venerated cow of the Hindoo.

How the truth first transpired has been often told. Eight miles from Calcutta lies the military station of Dum-Dum. For many years it had been the headquarters of the Bengal Artillery. There all the many distinguished officers of that distinguished corps had learnt the rudiments of their profession, and many had spent there the happiest years of their lives. But it was suddenly discovered that it was not suited to the purpose for which it was designed. The headquarters of the Artillery were removed to Meerut. The red coat displaced the blue. The barracks and the mess-house, and the officers' bungalows, were given up to other occupants; and buildings, which from their very birth had held nothing but the appliances of ordnance, were degraded into manufactories and storehouses of small-arm ammunition. Thus, by a mutation of fortune, when the Enfield Rifle began to supersede Brown Bess, Dum-Dum became one of three Cantonments at which the Government established Schools of Musketry for instruction in the use of the improved rifled weapon. Now, it happened that, one day in January, a low-caste Lascar, or magazine-man, meeting a high-caste Sepoy in the Cantonment, asked him for a drink of water from his lotah. The Brahmin at once replied with an objection on the score of caste, and was tauntingly told that caste was nothing, that high-caste and low-caste would soon be all the same, as cartridges smeared with beef-fat and hog's-lard were being made for the Sepoys at the depôts, and would soon be in general use throughout the army.[1]

The Brahmin carried this story to his comrades, and it was soon known to every Sepoy at the depôt. A shudder ran through the Lines. Each man to whom the story was told caught the great fear from his neighbour, and trembled at the thought of the pollution that lay before him. The contamination was to be brought to his very lips; it was not merely to be touched, it was to be eaten and absorbed into his very being. It was so terrible a thing, that, if the most malignant enemies of the British Government had sat in conclave for years, and brought an excess of devilish ingenuity to bear upon the invention of a scheme framed with the design of alarming the Sepoy mind from one end of India to the other, they could not have devised a lie better suited to the purpose. But now the English themselves had placed in the hands of their enemies, not a fiction, but a fact of tremendous significance, to be turned against them as a deadly instrument of destruction. It was the very thing that had been so long sought, and up to this time sought in vain. It required no explanation. It needed no ingenious gloss to make the full force of the thing itself patent to the multitude. It was not a suggestion, an inference, a probability; but a demonstrative fact, so complete in its naked truth, that no exaggeration could have helped it. Like the case of the leathern head-dresses, which had convulsed Southern India half a century before, it appealed to the strongest feelings both of the Mahomedan and the Hindoo, but though similar in kind, it was incomparably more offensive in degree; more insulting, more appalling, more disgusting.

We know so little of Native Indian society beyond its merest externals, the colour of the people's skins, the form of their garments, the outer aspects of their houses, that History, whilst it states broad results, can often only surmise causes. But there are some surmises which have little less than the force of gospel. We feel what we cannot see, and have faith in what we cannot prove. It is a fact, that there is a certain description of news, which travels in India, from one station to another, with a rapidity almost electric. Before the days of the 'lightning post,' there was sometimes intelligence in the Bazaars of the Native dealers and the Lines of the Native soldiers, especially if the news imported something disastrous to the British, days before it reached, in any official shape, the high functionaries of Government.[2] We cannot trace the progress of these evil-tidings. The Natives of India have an expressive saying, that 'it is in the air.' It often happened that an uneasy feeling—an impression that something had happened, though they 'could not discern the shape thereof'—pervaded

men's minds, in obscure anticipation of the news that was travelling towards them in all its tangible proportions. All along the line of road, from town to town, from village to village, were thousands to whom the feet of those who brought the glad tidings were beautiful and welcome. The British magistrate, returning from his evening ride, was perhaps met on the road near the Bazaar by a venerable Native on an ambling pony—a Native respectable of aspect, with white beard and whiter garments, who salaamed to the English gentleman as he passed, and went on his way freighted with intelligence refreshing to the souls of those to whom it was to be communicated, to be used with judgment and sent on with despatch. This was but one of many costumes worn by the messenger of evil. In whatsoever shape he passed, there was nothing outwardly to distinguish him. Next morning there was a sensation in the Bazaar, and a vague excitement in the Sepoy's Lines. But when rumours of disaster reached the houses of the chief English officers, they were commonly discredited. Their own letters were silent on the subject. It was not likely to be true, they said, as they had heard nothing about it. But it was true; and the news had travelled another hundred miles whilst the white gentlemen, with bland scepticism, were shaking their heads over the lies of the Bazaar.

It is difficult, in most cases, to surmise the agency to whose interested efforts is to be attributed this rapid circulation of evil tidings. But when the fact of the greased cartridges became known, there were two great motive powers, close at hand, to give an immediate impulse to the promulgation of the story. The penucal and the religious animosities, excited by the recent measures of the English, were lying in wait for an opportunity to vent themselves in action. It happened at this time, that the enmities which we had most recently provoked had their head-quarters in Calcutta. It happened, also, that these enmities had their root partly in Hindooism, partly in Mahomedanism. There was the great Brahminical Institution, the Doorma Soobha of Calcutta, whose special function it was to preserve Hindooism pure and simple in all its ancestral integrity, and, therefore, to resist the invasions and encroachments of the English, by which it was continually threatened. There were bygone injuries to revenge, and there were coming dangers to repel. On the other side, there was the deposed king-ship of Oude, with all its perilous surroundings. Sunk in slothfulness and self-indulgence, with little real care for anything beyond the enjoyment of the moment, Wajid Ali himself

may have neither done nor suggested anything, in this crisis, to turn to hostile account the fact of the greased cartridges. But there were those about him with keener eyes, and stronger wills, and more resolute activities, who were not likely to suffer such an opportunity to escape. It needed no such special agencies to propagate a story, which would have travelled, in ordinary course of accidental tale-bearing, to the different stations in the neighbourhood of the capital. But it was expedient in the eyes of our enemies that it should at once be invested with all its terrors, and the desired effect wrought upon the Sepoy's mind, before any one could be induced, by timely official explanation, to believe that the outrage was an accident, an oversight, a mistake. So, from the beginning, the story went forth that the English, in prosecution of a long-cherished design, and under instructions from the Queen in Council, had greased the Sepoys' cartridges with the fat of pigs and cows, for the express purpose of defiling both Mahomedans and Hindoos.

[...]

On the 28th of January, Hearsey reported officially to the Adjutant-General's office that an ill-feeling was 'said to subsist in the minds of the Sepoys of the regiments at Barrackpore.' 'A report,' he said, 'has been spread by some designing persons, most likely Brahmins, or agents of the religious Hindoo party in Calcutta (I believe it is called the "Dharma Sobha"), that the Sepoys are to be forced to embrace the Christian faith.' 'Perhaps,' he added,

> those Hindoos who are opposed to the marriage of widows in Calcutta[3] are using underhand means to thwart Government in abolishing the restraints lately removed by law for the marriage of widows, and conceive if they can make a party of the ignorant classes in the ranks of the army believe their religion or religious prejudices are eventually to be abolished by force, and by force they are all to be made Christians, and thus, by shaking their faith in Government, lose the confidence of their officers by inducing Sepoys to commit offences (such as incendiarism), so difficult to put a stop to or prove, they will gain their object.

The story of the greased cartridges was by this time in every mouth. There was not a Sepoy in the Lines of Barrackpore who was not familiar with it. There were few who did not believe that it was a deliberate plot, on the part of the English, designed to break down the caste of the Native soldier. And many were persuaded that there was an ultimate design to bring all men, along a common road of pollution, to the unclean faith of the beef-devouring, swine-eating Feringhee, who had

conquered their country and now yearned to extirpate the creeds of their countrymen.

There was a time, perhaps, when the Sepoy would have carried the story to his commanding officer, and sought an explanation of it. Such confidences had ceased to be a part of the relations between them. But it was not the less manifest that the Native soldiery at Barrackpore were boiling over with bitter discontent. They had accepted not only the fact as it came to them from Dum-Dum, but the accompanying lies which had been launched from Calcutta; and they soon began, after the fashion of their kind, to make a public display of their wrath. It is their wont in such cases to symbolize the inner fires that are consuming them by acts of material incendiarism. No sooner is the Sepoy troubled in his mind, and bent on resistance, than he begins covertly in the night to set fire to some of the public buildings of the place. Whether this is an ebullition of childish anger—an outburst of irrepressible feeling in men not yet ripe for more reasonable action; or whether it be intended as a signal, whether the fires are beacon-fires lit up to warn others to be stirring, they are seldom or never wanting in such conjunctures as this. A few days after the story of the greased cartridges first transpired at Dum-Dum, the telegraph station at Barrackpore was burnt down. Then, night after night, followed other fires. Burning arrows were shot into the thatched roofs of officers' bungalows. It was a trick learnt from the Sonthals, among whom the Second Grenadiers had served; and the fact that similar fires, brought about by the same means, were breaking out at Raneegunge, more than a hundred miles away, stamped their complicity in the crime, for one wing of the regiment was stationed there. These incendiary fires were soon followed by nocturnal meetings. Men met each other with muffled faces, and discussed, in excited language, the intolerable outrage which the British Government had deliberately committed upon them. It is probable that they were not all Sepoys who attended these nightly musters. It is probable that they were not all Sepoys who signed the letters that went forth from the post-offices of Calcutta and Barrackpore, calling upon the soldiery at all the principal stations of the Bengal Army to resist the sacrilegious encroachments of the English. All that is clearly known is, that the meetings were held, that the letters were sent; and Cantonment after Cantonment fermented with the story of the greased cartridges.

[...]

NOTES

1. No greased cartridges had been issued at Dum-Dum. The Sepoys in the musketry school there were only in the rudiments of their rifle-education, and had not come yet to need the application of the grease.

2. The news of the first outbreak and massacre at Caubul, in 1841, and also of the subsequent destruction of the British Army in the Pass, reached Calcutta through the Bazaars of Meerut and Kurnal some days before they found their way to Government House from any official quarter; and the mutiny at Barrackpore was known by the Sepoys of the British force proceeding to Burmah before it reached the military and political chiefs by special express. See *ante*, p. 269.

3. The General, doubtless, meant to say, 'those Hindoos in Calcutta who are opposed to the marriage of widows.'

PART II

Nationalist Uprising

PART II

Nationalist Uprising

The Character of the Outbreak of 1857*

R. C. Majumdar

DIVERGENT VIEWS

Divergent opinions have been expressed regarding the nature of the great outbreak of 1857. Volumes have been written on this subject, both by contemporary and later writers, and it is almost an impossible task to deal in detail with the different views and arguments advanced to support them.

These views may be broadly divided into two classes. Some think that the outbreak was really a rebellion of the people rather than merely a mutiny of the soldiers. Others hold that it was primarily and essentially a mutiny of sepoys, though in certain areas it drifted into a revolt of the people. Among contemporary writers, the first has been discussed at length by John Bruce Norton in a book entitled *Topics for Indian Statesmen,* and the second by Charles Raikes in his *Notes on the Revolt in North-Western Province of India,* both published in 1858.

That the second view had a large volume of support among Englishmen, immediately after the suppression of the Mutiny, will be evident from the following extract from an article in the *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1859): 'Throughout its whole progress it has faithfully retained the character of a military revolt... Except in the newly annexed state of Qude it has not been taken up by the population. Now it is this circumstance which has saved India to Englishmen'. The *Times* also expressed similar views.[1] On the other hand, a large number of English

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writers, such as Duff, Malleson, Kaye, and Ball subscribed to the first view and represented the outbreak of 1857 as an organized campaign to drive away the British from India. It is, however, significant that all the contemporary Indian writers, some of whom occupied very high position in public life, unanimously held the second view and looked upon the outbreak as essentially a military insurrection. Thus Kishorichand Mitra, an eminent Bengali, writing in 1858, says: 'The insurrection is essentially a military insurrection. It is the revolt of a *lac* of sepoys. It has nothing of the popular element in it. The proportion of those who have joined the rebels sinks into nothingness when compared with those whose sympathies are enlisted with the Government. While the former may be counted by thousands, the latter may be counted by millions.'[2] The same view was expressed by Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya,[3] and Harish Chandra Mukherji,[4] two eminent Bengali public men, and Sir Syed Ahmad,[5] who himself played an important role in the outbreak,...and rose to high distinction as the leader of the Indian Musalmans in the nineteenth century. Reference has already been made to the writings of three contemporary Indians[6] who were eye-witnesses of the events in Delhi and Bareilly. We have also the writings of one Bengali,[7] who was in Varanasi on pilgrimage, when the sepoys broke out into mutiny there, and also a few casual references in the autobiography of Rajnarain Basu, who is regarded as the father of nationalism in Bengal and was a very highly respected person. None of them felt any sympathy for the mutinous sepoys or the cause they represented, and looked upon them as evil-doers rather than fighters for freedom. No reference is made by any of them to any popular support behind the Mutiny. Godse Bhatji, a Marathi who travelled over North India during the outbreak, also expressed a similar view.[8]

Both the British Indian Association and the Muhammadan Association of Calcutta passed resolutions on the outbreak of the Mutiny, denouncing it and trusting that it would meet with 'no sympathy, countenance or support from the bulk of the civil population.'[9] ...[E]ven Bahadur Shah, Nana, and the Rani of Jhansi denounced the sepoys.

In contrast with the contemporary Indians, their descendants of the present day look upon the outbreak of 1857 as a general revolt of the people, and what is more curious, accuse the Englishmen of deliberately misrepresenting the great popular rebellion as a mutiny. It will be quite

clear from what has been said above, that there is not the least truth in this accusation. The divergence of views did not follow any racial line, at least at the beginning, save that, so far as available evidence goes, it was the Indians, and not the Englishmen of the time, who unanimously represented or misrepresented the outbreak as essentially a mutiny. That this was the general view of even eminent Indian statesmen down to the end of the nineteenth century is proved by the statement recorded by Dadabhai Naoroji that 'the people in India not only had no share in it (the Mutiny), but were actually ready at the call of the authorities to rise and support them.'[10]

Today the Indians, generally speaking, subscribe to the views of Norton and his followers. Indeed, since the beginning of the present century, the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, and most Indians not only look upon the outbreak of 1857 as a great revolt of the people, but go even further and claim it to be the first 'Indian War of Independence.' This view has been made popular by the publication of a book with the above title by Sri V. D. Savarkar, an eminent Indian patriot, who played a very prominent part in India's struggle for freedom in the present century, and suffered much for his activities in the hands of the British authorities. A general revolt or a war of independence necessarily implies or presupposes a definite plan and organization. This is admitted in the latest edition of Savarkar's book where it is stated, about the outbreak of 1857, that the 'national minded leaders and thinkers have regarded it as a planned and organised political and military rising aimed at destroying the British power in India.'[11] Further, such an organization implies a pre-concerted conspiracy or plot to drive out the British. But, as shown in the preceding chapter, there is no evidence for the existence of any such conspiracy.

It is unnecessary to discuss all the different views so far held on the subject, as most of them cover more or less the same grounds. It will suffice to state the views of a representative of each of the two classes mentioned above. For obvious reasons, I have selected only contemporary persons who had every opportunity of knowing the truth, and an Indian for the first view and an Englishman for the second.

In a letter written to Kaye, dated 14th December, 1864, Syed Ahmad, the veteran Muslim statesman, who personally played an important role in the mutiny at Bijnor, observes as follows:

There was no popular outbreak. Even the soldiers would not have mutinied but for Meerut punishments.

The rebellion in the N. W. P. assumed three forms:

1st. Robbers and dacoits...not only attacked wayfarers but also plundered villages and towns.

2nd. Some of the minor chiefs whose families have fallen into decay endeavoured the resuscitation of their ancestral power. This sort of mutiny occurred in four places only Cawnpore, Bareilly, Bijnor, and Farrukhabad. Some of these parties tried to have themselves restored while there were compelled by the mutineers to make an effort.

3rd. Some of the lower classes, variously employed entered the service of such rebellious chiefs.

As far as I know the population of no part of the N. W. P. tried or even thought of rendering any assistance to the native rebellious chiefs much less that of subverting British rule. A great proof of the justice of this assertion lies in the fact that as soon as the mutinous troops and the rebellious chief were expelled from a district, peace was immediately restored I, therefore, think that the mutiny of 1857 was not a popular rebellion.[12]

John Bruce Norton wrote a big book entitled *Topics for Indian Statesmen.* In chapter II of this book the author discusses the causes and the character of the Sepoy Mutiny. He is of opinion that the outbreak was more a rebellion of the people than merely a mutiny of the soldiers. [...]

REVOLT OF THE CIVIL POPULATION—ITS EXTENT AND CHARACTER

In order to judge the real nature of the great outbreak of 1857, it is necessary to form an accurate idea of the rebellious movement both among the sepoys and the civil population. As regards the revolt of civil population it is possible to take a dispassionate view of its true nature only if one dismisses the idea of a general conspiracy or even of a concerted action on the part of its so-called leaders like Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Kunwar Singh, and others. Enough has been said above, in Book II Chapter III, to indicate its general characteristics, which may be summed up as follows: First, the civil population in each locality revolted only when the British authority had left it and the administrative machinery had completely broken down. The people came to believe that the British Raj was at an end and merely took advantage of the political vacuum thus created to serve their own material interests. Secondly, there

was no co-ordination between the different groups of rebels or their leaders except in the very last phase when they were pushed to the corner by the advancing British army. Thirdly, each group or individual leader fought for self-interest and had no allegiance to a common cause. This is strikingly illustrated by the assumption of supreme authority, by Bahadur Shah, as Emperor of Hindusthan and Nana Sahib as the Peshwa. Sundry other chiefs declared themselves rulers in their own localities, and though some of them paid nominal allegiance either to Bahadur Shah or to Nana, they all exercised their authority as independent sovereigns. Fourthly, from the very beginning the goonda elements of the population and particularly the marauding tribes like Gujars, Ranghars, etc. took a prominent part in the local risings. Even the ordinary people were animated more by subversive than constructive activities. The result was that plunder, rapine, massacre, and incendiarism, on a large scale, directed against the Europeans as well as Indians, mostly characterized these outbreaks. In addition to these, personal vendetta, a desire to gain by force what was lost by legal process, settling old scores and satisfying personal grudge played a large part in the popular upsurge almost wherever it occurred.

It would appear from the detailed account given in Book II, that the mutiny was most widely spread in the area now covered by the State of Uttar Pradesh, and fringes of neighbouring territories in all directions save the north, and there the civil population was also largely affected. The state of things outside the area requires a detailed consideration. There was mutiny in the Panjab, but it was only in the East Panjab that it was for a time turned into a mass movement, mainly due to the predatory habits of large elements of population. But order was soon restored with the aid of the loyal chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, and Jhind, and the Sikhs and other loyal elements of the population. In Bengal and East Bihar, some sepoys mutinied at Dacca, Chittagong, Tipperah, and Bhagalpur, but were dispersed without difficulty. The civil population was unaffected, though there was an outbreak among the Santals, who had also revolted only two years before.

In the area lying to the south of the Yamuna, Ajmer was quiet but there were isolated mutinies at Nasirabad and Neemuch, the two chief military stations under British occupation. The sepoys of these places set out for Delhi, plundering villages and burning houses on their way. Order was, however, soon restored, chiefly with the help of the troops of Jodhpur.

There were risings at Indore, Mandasor, and Dhar, but these were

easily put down and it is said that 'the country population turned on the beaten rebels and destroyed many of them.' Rajasthan was quiet, though minor risings took place here and there.

The mutiny at Jhansi was followed by that at Nowgong. Soon there was insurrection of local chiefs in some parts of Bundelkhand. There were risings in Sagar and Nerbudda territories. On June 12, the sepoys mutinied at Lalitpur. Powerful chiefs like the Nawab of Banda, and Raja of Banpur rebelled, but many remained quite faithful to the British, and some of these, like the ruler of Orchha, helped the British and even fought against those that rebelled. Mutinies broke out at Sagar and Jubbulpore and shortly the disturbances became general. There were plunderings on a large scale. Minor chiefs (Thakurs) plundered villages, and village communities preyed upon each other. Villages refused to pay revenues to the Government.

There were attempts at mutiny both at Nagpur and Hyderabad, the capital of the Nizam, but prompt action on the part of the authorities prevented actual outbreak.

It would appear from what has been said above that the great outbreak of 1857 assumed different aspects in different areas. In some places it was purely a mutiny of the sepoys, joined at a later stage by some discontented elements as well as the riff-raff and other disturbing elements of society who are always eager to take advantage of anarchy and confusion to serve their own ends. In other areas the Mutiny was succeeded by a general revolt in which, in addition to the above elements, other classes of people, particularly dispossessed chiefs, ejected landlords and tenants, and other persons nourishing personal grievances joined in the fray in the hope of regaining their power and possessions. In addition to these two we may note a third area in which we can trace a sullen discontent against the British and passive, even active, sympathy with the mutineers among the civil population or certain sections of it, but no overt acts of rebellion by them.

If we now proceed to make a geographical distribution of those three areas we have to include the Panjab and a large part of Madhya Pradesh under the first zone; the greater part of U.P., a small part of Madhya Pradesh and the western part of Bihar under the second zone; and nearly the whole of Rajasthan and Maharashtra under the third zone. In spite of petty local risings here and there, the whole of Bengal, Assam, Eastern Bihar, Orissa, Eastern Deccan, and South India practically remained unaffected by the great outbreak.

As regards the second zone, where alone the revolt seemed to be of a popular or national character, there were particular local reasons for it, at least in respect of Avadh, which was so arbitrarily annexed only a year before the Mutiny broke out. As we shall see later, many have regarded this act on the part of Dalhousie as one of the chief and immediate causes of the Mutiny. Even the British authorities in England had to admit the special reasons for violent outbreak in Avadh, as is shown by the following extract from a letter written by the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to the Governor-General on 19 April, 1858.

> War in Oudh has derived much of its popular character from the sudden dethronement of the Crown and the summary settlement of the revenue which deprived a large number of landlords of their lands.
>
> Under the circumstances, hostilities which have been carried on in Oude have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion.[13]

As noted above,[14] a regular government was set up at Lakhnau under the son of the ex-King Wajid Ali, but the real powers behind the throne were the Begam and Ahmadulla.

If we turn to the other prominent leaders associated with the movement, namely Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and Kunwar Singh, it immediately strikes us that all these four were smarting under grievous injury done to them by the British and, therefore, bore special grudge against them. It may be argued that although they were actuated primarily by self-interest they might at the same time have been inspired by the idea of patriotism. This may be so, for all we know, but we have no evidence in support of it. It is an undeniable fact that all the leading figures in this great outbreak were alienated from the British for private reasons. It may be a pure accident, but the fact remains.

It is often urged that they were the natural leaders under whom the Indians fought the War of Independence. It is not easy to understand in what sense these four persons could be regarded as natural leaders. The first was a dotard and a puppet on the throne of the Mughals, who inherited nothing but their name, and had little power and less knowledge of men and things. The second was an adopted child of a worthless wicked ex-Peshwa who was mainly instrumental in ruining the Maratha power. These have certainly no better claim to be regarded as natural leaders than the hundreds of ruling chiefs in India, and in particular the more eminent among them such as the Sindhia, the Holkar, the Nizam, and

the various Rajput chiefs. Neither the Rani of Jhansi nor Kunwar Singh, in spite of their personal ability, has any right to be called a natural leader of the country. The first was the young widow of an almost unknown ruler of a petty State, then defunct, and the second was a small Talukdar in the interior of Bihar, utterly impoverished beyond hopes of recovery. Even their names were probably unknown before 1857 to persons beyond a hundred miles of their native places.

We have referred more than once to the different classes of people who joined the revolt against the British. We may now mention some of the prominent classes or groups who kept aloof from it. Among these elements the most prominent were the great ruling chiefs of India such as Sindhia, Holkar, Gaekwar, the Nizam, and the historic ruling houses of Rajasthan, Mysore, and Travancore. The Sikh chiefs, such as those of Jhind and Patiala, actively helped the British. Some minor chiefs joined the rebellion, but their proportion to the rest who did not, would not probably exceed one per cent.

The English educated classes as a rule not only did not join the movement, but were treated as enemies by the sepoys. This is known from the statements made by two eminent Bengalis as noted above. [...]

COMMUNAL RELATIONS

Those who look upon the outbreak of 1857 as a national revolt advance as a strong argument in support of their view that it was a joint endeavour of the two great communities, viz. Hindus and Mussulmans. But though the sepoys and the common people of both the communities fought together against the English, we miss that real communal amity which characterizes a national effort. It is a significant fact that the contemporary Englishmen generally viewed upon the outbreak mainly as a handiwork of the Muslims. Reference may be made to a few opinions out of many. Thus Raikes says, 'They (the Muslims) have behaved in the part of India where I had jurisdiction, very ill; so ill indeed that if the rest of the population had sympathized with them, instead of antagonised, I should despair of governing India for the future'. He then adds the following in support of his view.

I cannot give a fairer instance of the difference between the conduct of the Hindoo and Mahomedan people at the time of the mutiny than was afforded in our own court at Agra. We had numerous Mahomedans and Hindoos, with a sprinkling of

Christians, at the bar. With one exception, all the Mahomedan pleaders left the court; one of them, Sufdur Ali by name, was hanged by order of Mr Harington, for plundering the property of an English Officer. The rest gave no assistance whatever to us. The Hindoos, on the contrary, exerted themselves to protect and secure the property of their English judges, preserved our horses and moveable property, and did whatever else they could to show their loyalty and affection. The Mahomedans either deserted us or joined the rebels. And so it was all over the North-Western Provinces, a Mahomedan was another word for a rebel.[15]

Raikes is supported by other contemporary Englishmen, Roberts (later Field Marshall) wrote that he would 'show these rascally Musalmans that, with God's help, Englishmen will still be masters of India.'[16] Mrs Coopland writes: 'As this is completely a Mahomedan rising, there is not much to be feared from the Hindoos of Benares.'[17] Captain P. G. Scot remarks in his Report on the mutiny at Jhansi: 'At Nowgong and Jhansi they let the infantry begin the mutiny. I believe the reason was solely that they wished to conceal the character of the movement, viz. its being a Mahomedan one. They were the most blood-thirsty, when the mutiny did break out.'[18]

A military officer, who took part in the siege of Delhi, writes: 'The Mahomedans were generally hostile to us, the Hindoos much less.' This feeling persisted in the official circle even long after the fall of Delhi. Referring to the city of Delhi, the same writer observes: 'It was not till the end of November, that the Hindu portion of the population was allowed to return. No Mahomedans could get in at the gate without a special order, and a mark was set upon their houses and they were required to prove their loyalty before getting back again.'[19]

Not only the Europeans, but even the Muslims themselves, at least a section of them, believed that they were the senior partners in the great undertaking. Sir Syed Ahmad indirectly admitted this fact when he said: 'The Muslims were in every respect more dissatisfied than the Hindus, and hence in most districts they were comparatively more rebellions, though the latter, were not wanting in this respect.'[20] This is also quite clear from the many Proclamations issued by the Muslim chiefs who had assumed independent authority in various localities. Reference may be made to the two Proclamations issued by Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly whose activities have been described above. Throughout his Proclamations runs the assumption that while the Muslims are exerting themselves to the utmost, the Hindus are lukewarm in their efforts. Accordingly a bait

was offered to the Hindus. 'If the Hindoos', so runs the Proclamation, 'shall exert themselves in the murder of these infidels and expel them from the country, they shall be rewarded for their patriotism by the extinction of the practice of the slaughter of the kine.' But it was made abundantly clear that 'the entire prohibition of this practice is made conditional upon the complete extermination of the infidels from India. If any Hindoo shall shrink from joining in this cause, the evils of revival of this practice shall recoil upon them.'[21]

It is also a very significant fact that all the Proclamations of the Muslim chiefs in Avadh and Rohilkhand contain an appeal to the Muslims in the name of their religion, and remind them on their faith in the Quran, that by fighting against the infidels, or paying money to others to fight, they would secure to themselves eternal beatitude. To the Hindus also the appeal was made in the name of their religion by pointing out how the British Government defiled it by introducing the remarriage of widows, the abolition of *Suttee*, etc. To the native rulers also, after referring to the annexation of States, appeal was made in the name of religion. 'Their designs for destroying your religion, O Rajas, is manifest.... Be it known to all of you, that if these English are permitted to remain in India, they will butcher you all and put an end to your religion.'[22]

It is quite obvious that the idea of a common national endeavour to free the country from the yoke of the British is conspicuous by its absence in these Proclamations. Indeed we could hardly expect such an idea in those days from people of this class, though in our national enthusiasm in later days we attributed it to them.

It is equally obvious that the great difference between the Hindus and the Muslims loomed large even in the territories where the revolt of the civil population was most widely spread. An attempt was made to minimise the evil by emphasizing the paramount need of unity between the two communities. A Proclamation was issued at Delhi with the royal permission, urging upon the two communities to unite in the struggle. But it also stressed the religion as the guiding force of the movement. In view of its importance it may be quoted in full.

To all Hindoos and Mussulmans, citizens and servants of Hindostan, the Officers of the Army now at Delhi and Meerut send greeting:

It is well known that in these days all the English have entertained these evil designs—first, to destroy the religion of the whole Hindustani Army, and then to make the people by compulsion Christians. Therefore, we solely on account of

our religion, have combined with the people, and have not spared alive one infidel, and have re-established the Delhi dynasty on these terms. Hundreds of guns and a large amount of treasure have fallen into our hands; therefore, it is fitting that whoever of the soldiers and people dislike turning Christians should unite with one heart, and, acting courageously, not leave the seed of these infidels remaining.

It is further necessary that all Hindoos and Mussulmans unite in this struggle, and, following the instructions of some respectable people, keep themselves secure, so that good order may be maintained, the poorer classes kept contented, and they themselves be exalted to rank and dignity.

But the communal spirit was too deeply rooted to be wiped out by mere pious wishes embodied in Proclamations, even of the King himself. It raised its ugly head in the city of Delhi itself even when its siege by the British was imminent, and the fate of the whole struggle depended upon its successful defence by the combined efforts of all communities. Thus we read in Jiwanlal's Diary, under the date, May 19:

This day the standard of the Holy War was raised by the Mahommedans in the Jumma Masjid. The people of Dharampur and the low characters of the city were concerned in this act. The King was angry and remonstrated, because such a display of fanaticism would only tend to exasperate the Hindus.

On May 20, he writes:

Moulvie Mahommed Said demanded an audience, and represented to the King that the standard of Holy War had been erected for the purpose of inflaming the minds of the Mahommedans against the Hindus. The King answered that such a jehad was quite impossible, and such an idea an act of extreme folly, for the majority of the Purbeah soldiers were Hindus. Moreover, such an act would create internecine war, and the result would be deplorable. It was fitting that sympathy should exist among all classes. It was pointed out that the Hindus were leaning towards an alliance with the English and had no sympathy with the Mahommedans, and were already holding themselves apart. A deputation of Hindu officers arrived to complain of the war against Hindus being preached. The King replied: 'The Holy War is against the English; I have forbidden it against the Hindus.'

... At three o'clock Hakim Ahsanullah Khan represented that the soldiers were looting in the city, and requested that they should be expelled. To get rid of them, orders were this day issued to Mirza Mogul to proceed with a strong force towards Meerut to attack any English force assembled there.[23]

The account of Jiwanlal is confirmed by the following extract of a letter written by Major General T. Reed from his camp at Delhi to Lawrence,

the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab: 'They are displaying the green flag in the city and bullying the Hindus who are praying for our Government—so says our secret intelligence.' This letter is dated June 14, 1857.[24] Chunilal also refers to the incident in his written statement during the trial of Bahadur Shah.

But the communal spirit was not confined to Delhi. We learn from official report that on the night of the Mutiny (June 4) at Varanasi 'news was received that some Mussulmans had determined to raise the Green Flag in the temple of Bishessur... Mr Lind called on the Rajputs in the city to prevent the insult to their faith. So the Musulmans retired peacefully.'[25]

The communal hatred led to ugly communal riots in many parts of U.P. Green Flag was hoisted and bloody wars were fought between the Hindus and Muslims in Bareilly, Bijnor, Moradabad, and other places where the Muslims shouted for the revival of the Muslim kingdom.

Such communal ideas persisted even long after the Mutiny. Blunt, an eminent Englishman, who visited India during the Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, was told by an old Muslim Grandee, the Chief of Loharo, more than twenty years later, that 'what he did not like about the Mutiny was that most of them were Hindus.'[26] Such communal feelings were not, of course, universal, but it is clearly proved by the Proclamations and Hindu-Muslim riots that they largely prevailed in U.P., the only province in which the outbreak developed into a general revolt. Even the mass revolt in U.P. can, therefore, be scarcely regarded as a truly national one.

The communal feeling was not the only obstacle to the solidarity of a national spirit. There was racial animosity produced by historical causes. It was most clearly manifested in the suspicion and jealousy, if not positive hatred, between the Muslims on the one hand and the Marathas and the Sikhs on the other. The British statesmen in India were fully cognizant of this and exploited it to their advantage. As a concrete instance reference may be made to the situation in Hyderabad in 1857, where anti-British feeling was roused by the events in Northern India, and the elements of insurrection were as rife as in many other parts where it actually broke out. Analysing the current feelings of the Muslims in Hyderabad at that time, Col. Davidson, the Resident of Hyderabad writes:

> The insurrectionary movements in the Mahratta States of Holkar and Scindia, except as a general means of excitement to subvert our power, were never regarded with any favour at Hyderabad; indeed, a general Mahratta movement, having a

probability of success, would have at once enlisted on our side the old hereditary and ever cherished 'Moglaee' animosity against their former and national foe, the Mahrattas, and there is no doubt the Nizam and his own immediate army would have been easily induced to take the field in our favour on such an event and in such a cause.

Gwalior fell, and was retaken without a sign, except few passing remarks at Hyderabad, and although a rising in favour of Tantia Topee was latterly planned by emissaries sent by the Nana, it, as far as it went, was only joined by some of the most impoverished and desperate characters of the Durbar, while the Deccan Mahommedans of the contingent were perfectly willing, as of old, to be led against Scindia and Holkar, which they believed was the case when they first took the field to join the Bombay troops in Malwa.

While this was the feeling towards the Mahrattas, it was very different in regard to the Mahommedan cause. Every eye was turned towards Delhi and Lucknow, and news of every kind was eagerly sought and paid for. Disastrous rumours of the wildest kind, hostile to the British Government, were prevalent and always acceptable to the fanatical and warlike classes of the population; letters of the most treasonable and seditious character were intercepted from Aurangabad, Bhupal, Ahmedabad, Belgaum, Kurnool, and Mysore; and there cannot be a doubt that, had a popular leader arisen, Hyderabad would have been speedily in a state of insurrection as it had already been of sedition, but fortunately no one of rank, wealth, and position could rise after the unsuccessful attack on the Residency in July 1857, which was the culminating point of our troubles in Hyderabad, and also as it was plain to all that the British Government were determined to fight the battle to the last and at all hazards, wherever insurrection showed itslef.[27]

This racial feeling was certainly shared by the Sikhs. The Proclamation of Bahadur Shah as Emperor alienated them as they naturally interpreted it as the restoration of the rule of the Muslims from whom they had suffered so much in the past. It is on record that high British officials in the Panjab successfully persuaded the Sikhs to cast in their lot with them by describing in vivid language the injuries and insults they had suffered in the past in the hands of the Mughal Emperors. Having impressed this point on their mind they held out before them the grand opportunity they now had of taking full vengeance. There can be hardly any doubt that the Sikhs were largely influenced by such considerations in wholeheartedly offering their services to the British Government.

There are good grounds to believe that the same spirit alienated the Rajputs and the Marathas, as they, too, for historical reasons, did not favour the restoration of the Muslim rule. This view is supported by the conduct of Nana Sahib, first in inducing the sepoys not to proceed to Delhi, and

then in proclaiming himself as the Peshwa. It is also to be noted that none of the Rajput and Maratha chiefs responded to the invitation of Bahadur Shah, and all the propaganda in Maharashtra was carried on in the name of Nana.

These considerations, as well as the fact that by far the greater part of India was free from any overt acts of hostility against the British Government, divest the outbreak of 1857 of a national character, properly so called.

WAS THE OUTBREAK OF 1857 A NATIONAL WAR OF INDEPENDENCE?

We may now proceed to discuss whether it can be regarded as a national war of independence. In properly judging this question we have to take into consideration the character of the outbreak as discussed above, as well as the motives of the different persons and classes who took part in it. As we have seen above, the most important elements who fought against the British were the sepoys. They had their own grievances, similar to those which led to local mutinies on many previous occasions. The utmost that can be said is that they were also inspired by the motive of defending their religion against the intrigues of Christians to pollute them, but not that of regaining the freedom of their country. Even this charitable interpretation is, however, not admitted by all. We have quoted above the opinion of Ahsanulla that the sepoys were inspired more by a desire of material gain than any political or even religious consideration. Such a view is amply supported by the conduct of the sepoys at Delhi and in other places. Far from enlisting the sympathy and support of the people at large, they were intent on plundering them and burning their villages. It is a painful but undeniable fact that both Europeans and Indians were alike victims to their fury and greed, and in many places they inspired a sense of dread and terror rather than that of sympathy and fellow-feeling among the people. The sepoys at Delhi refused to fight unless they were paid their salaries, and that on an adequate scale,—a demand which is hardly in consonance with the spirit which should guide a fighter in a war of independence. Many sepoys at Delhi, Bareilly, and Allahabad, and probably in other places, too, after plundering indiscriminately, went back to their homes to enjoy the wealth they had secured, without any thought of any other question or policy. There is

nothing in the conduct or behaviour of the sepoys which would justify us in the belief, or even assumption, that they were inspired by love for their country and fought against the British with the definite idea of freeing their motherland.

In this connection a very important fact is often forgotten by those who claim the outbreak of 1857 as a national war of independence, for which patriotic sepoys shed their blood, and political leaders had been preparing grounds for a long time. The Panjab was conquered by the British with the help of the sepoys less than ten years before the outbreak of Mutiny. The battle of Chillianwala, which proved the valour and heroism of the Sikhs and their ability, under more favourable circumstances, to defeat the English, was fought in 1849, only eight years before the Mutiny. If there were really a movement for freeing India from the British yoke, obviously this was the most suitable opportunity. But we have not the least evidence to show that the Indian leaders like Nana Sahib and others mentioned above raised even their little finger to help the Sikhs. The sepoys themselves, who are supposed to have sacrificed their all for the sake of their country in 1857, had not the least scruple to fight the Sikhs who were the last defender of liberty in India. There are even allegations that the Sikhs entreated the sepoys to refuse help to the British, but in vain. Although this cannot be definitely proved, it should have occurred to every sepoy, if he had real love for his country, that by defeating the Sikhs he would only forge the last link in the chain by which India was being fettered by the British. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the attitude and activities of the sepoys in 1849 certainly did not correspond to the patriotic fervour with which they are supposed to be endowed in 1857. Unless, therefore, we suppose that this sentiment was suddenly developed during the short interval of eight years, we can hardly regard the sepoys, who rebelled in 1857, as being inspired by the idea of regaining freedom of India. Incidentally, the Sikh War also proves the absence, in 1849, of any serious conspiracy or organization against the British, although according to Sitaram Bawa, such conspiracy against the British was going on for many years in almost every native court. Surely the Sikh War would have been the most suitable opportunity, if ever there were any, which the conspirators should have taken advantage of for organising a war of independence against the British.

As mentioned above, the Sikhs, along with the Gurkhas faithfully served the British during the outbreak of 1857, and were mainly instrumental in

defeating the sepoys. It is usual to blame the Sikhs for this unpatriotic act, but they could hardly be expected to pay the sepoys back other than in their own coins. The same argument also applies to the Gurkhas whose country was invaded and who were defeated by the British with the help of the sepoys in 1815.

As a matter of fact, Indian sepoys, belonging to any part of the country, never refused to fight against Indians on behalf of the British. This has been shown repeatedly in all war of the British during the first half of the 19th century.

Nothing but the strongest positive evidence should lead us to believe that the sepoys changed almost overnight into patriotic Indians who risked their position and prospect, and even lives, merely for the sake of their country. No such evidence is, however, forthcoming.

Much stress has been laid on the Proclamations issued by the various chiefs, urging the people to drive out the Firingis (British). But it should be remembered that this cry of driving out the British was not a new thing. Such a cry was raised freely, at the time of the rebellion of Chait Singh, in the very region of Avadh where it was prominently heard during 1857. Nobody can possibly deny that throughout the British rule there was an undercurrent of strong feeling of hostility against the British, and there arose on several occasions similar cries of driving away the Firingis.... [There are numerous instances] where local chiefs not only defied the British authority but even set up independent governments of their own. No particular importance need therefore be attached to such Proclamations or risings in 1857, nor can we, for that reason alone, regard the outbreak as a war for freeing India from the British control.

The heroic fight against the British by some Talukdars of Avadh like Beni Madho has invested the whole class with a sort of sanctity as fighters for national freedom. Yet it should be remembered that with a very few exceptions, the Talukdars did not show any active hostility against the British before the issue of the Confiscation Proclamation by Lord Canning on March 20, 1858, which threatened practically the whole body of Talukdars with the confiscation of their ill-gotten gain. It has been pointed out by Innes that they had aided the fugitive (European) residents of outstation at the outbreak; they had helped Sir Henry Lawrence, with supplies; with three exceptions they had held aloof from joining the rebel army; either personally or through their retainers... they sent to the rebel camp only such contingents as were demanded and personally remained

passive...they had abstained from harassing British troops—in marked contrast with their conduct after the Proclamation was issued.[28] Although this statement may not be accurate in all details, its substantial truth cannot be challenged. It gives us a real insight into the motive of the Talukdars. The great majority of them had to fight for retaining possession of the lands which they had recovered by force from the auction-purchasers, and quite a considerable number, faced with the alternatives of loss of property and probably also of life, and the fight to the last, chose the latter and more honourable course.

As regards the rank and the file, they faithfully observed the traditional policy of following the master of the moment, as very pertinently pointed out by Sir Syed Ahmad. 'The Indians believe,' says he, 'that there is no crime in serving the master, and they should obey the ruler of the moment. So a large number of otherwise well-disposed men went over to the side of the rebels and espoused their cause.'[29]

Many contemporary Englishmen have made similar observations. According to Sir John Lawrence, 'many sepoys did not at first join the mutineers, but fear and temptation decided their course of action. They were threatened with social ostracism, and the temptation to plunder these treasuries (at outway stations) was too great for the virtue of our best disposed native troops.[30]

'Hundreds, perhaps thousands, committed themselves simply from the force of circumstances; on the one hand threatened with fire and sword if they refused, on the other plunder and social advantages were pressed on them. Many hesitated long, but seeing no vitality in our power, no prospect of succour, they concluded that the game was up and began to act for themselves.'[31]

If the chiefs were really inspired by a grim determination to drive away the English and free their country from foreign yoke, they should have sunk all petty differences among themselves and joined in a united effort to fight against the British. But instead of pursuing this noble objective, we find them all busy serving their own personal interests. The Talukdars of Avadh made it their first business to recover the estates they had lost, and they fought against the British because otherwise they could not retain possession of them. Many chiefs, even in U.P., began their campaign by acts of aggression against their neighbours, and at the beginning they fought more amongst themselves than against the British. After this first bout, the cry of 'Drive the Firingis' came in very

handy to them, as without effecting that they could not hope to enjoy, for long, their ill-gotten gain. There is no doubt that in most cases it is this self-interest which found expression in the patriotic cry of 'Drive the Firingis'. To some people of Avadh this cry might have a genuine ring of patriotism, for it was annexed only a year before, and some might be patriotic enough to use this cry to recover the independence of the country. But so far as the big chiefs and Talukdars are concerned, one can hardly doubt that such feelings were, in most cases, subordinated to the considerations of personal interest.

The rebellion of chiefs and people in Avadh constitutes the chief claim of the outbreak of 1857 to be regarded as a war of independence. [...] If several Talukdars and other chiefs of Avadh, who took advantage of the general mutiny of British sepoys to rise against the British, are to be looked upon as fighters for independence of India, can we withhold such claim or recognition from Wazir Ali of Avadh, Pyche Raja of Malabar, Dhundia Wagh of Mysore, Lakshman Dawa of Ajaygadh, Gopal Singh of Bundelkhand, Vizieran Rauze of Vizianagram, Dhananjaya Bhanja of Gumsur, Velu Thampi of Travancore, Jagabandhu of Khurda, the Rajas of Dhalbhum, and hosts of others, [...] who had the courage to rise single-handed and defy the British authority? Even in Uttar Pradesh, Dayaram of Aligarh and Bijoy Singh of Kunja, near Rurki, opposed a greater resistance to the British authority, without any external help, than Beni Madho and others in the same Province did in 1857–8. So if we regard the outbreak of 1857–8 as a war of independence, we must regard such war to be in continuous operation in more extensive regions in India, almost throughout the first century of British rule. There is no special reason to select the rising of 1857–8 in U.P. as specially befitting this designation in preference to many others occurring before it.

As a matter of fact we can hardly expect a national war of independence in India either in 1857 or at any time before it. For nationalism or patriotism, in the true sense, was conspicuous by its absence in India till a much later date. To regard the outbreak of 1857 as either national in character or a war for independence of India betrays a lack of true knowledge of the history of Indian people in the nineteenth century.

The example of Syed Ahmad Khan, noted above, is of peculiar significance. He was a staunch supporter of the British during the Mutiny and yet rose to be the undisputed leader of Muslims in U.P. This proves

the absence of a strong national feeling in favour of the Mutiny even within a short time of its suppression.

As a matter of fact it is clear from a perusal of contemporary literature that the Mutiny of 1857 did not evoke any sense of national feeling at the time, nor was it regarded as a national war of independence till the rise of national consciousness at the close of the nineteenth century. It is on record that the public meetings were held in many parts of India condemning the Mutiny, and congratulatory addresses, even illuminations, followed notable British victories.[32] Of course, we should not take all these at their face value. But taking everything into consideration it is difficult to conclude that the Mutiny was regarded at the time, or for many years afterwards, as a war of national independence.

Indeed it would be a travesty of truth to describe the revolt of the civil population as a national war of independence. National (?) it certainly was not, for, as noted above, the 'upsurge of the people' was limited to a comparatively narrow region of India, comprising at best the greater part of U.P. and a narrow zone to its east, west, and south. The whole of Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Rajasthan, and greater parts of the Panjab, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, as well as the whole of India, south of the Narmada, hardly witnessed any overt act of rebellion on the part of the people.

But even within the narrow zone where the civil population revolted, there were considerable sections who were friendly to the English. The ruling chiefs in the East Panjab, and the entire landed aristocracy of Bihar, with very few exceptions, firmly and consistently stood by the British Government. Even in Avadh and Rohilkhand, several chiefs, including the Nawab of Rampur did the same. One of them, Derigbijah (Digbijay ?) Singh, gave shelter to Mowbray Thomson, one of the survivors of the Kanpur massacre, at considerable risk to himself. [...] [T]he English-educated classes kept themselves aloof from the mutinous sepoys and were regarded as enemies by them; also a number of sepoys even in the worst affected areas remained loyal to the British.[33]

The general attitude of the people towards the English, even in the worst affected areas, was not uniformly hostile. Charles Raikes, who was a Judge at Agra during the Mutiny, bears witness to this.[34] Apart from his own personal knowledge of the good feelings of the people in May 1857, he refers to Messrs. Phillipps and Bramly, civil officers of considerable position and experience at Agra, who traversed the country in June 1857,

from Furrukhabad and Etah in the Doab, and from Budaon in Rohilkhand, with a very small escort of three or four horsemen. They had been travelling for nearly a month amongst the villages, and on their arrival at Agra declared, that 'the villagers are all on our side, except some of the Mahomedans'. [...]

We may therefore proceed to discuss whether the outbreak of 1857 may be regarded as a war of independence, even though restricted to a limited area and to certain sections of people within it. In order to reply to this question, it is necessary to have a clear and definite understanding as to the precise meaning of the phrase 'war of independence'. There are not a few who seem to think that any fight by any group of Indians against the British must be regarded as a struggle for independence. The validity of this contention may be easily tested by the two specific instances of the grim and prolonged struggle carried on against the British by the Pindaris and the Wahabis, in the first and third quarters of the 19th century.[35] There is no doubt about the severity of the struggle against the English in each case, backed by an organization to which the outbreak of 1857 could lay no claim. Yet, it would be absurd to maintain that the Pindaris fought for the independence of India. As to the Wahabis, they fought heroically against the English with a grim determination to drive them out of India in order to establish a *Dar-ul-Islam*, or 'Kingdom of the Muslims'. They began to fight against the Sikhs with the same object, and when the British conquered the Panjab from the Sikhs, they simply transferred their hostility against the new power. Now, if we regard their fight against the English as a war of independence, by no logic can we withhold this nomenclature from the fight of the Wahabis against the Sikhs. In other words, we are reduced to the absurd position of regarding a war to drive out the Sikhs from the Panjab as an Indian war of independence.

These two examples serve to show that merely a fight against the English, even with the distinct object of driving them away, cannot be regarded as an Indian war of independence. The crucial point is the ultimate object with which such a fight is carried on, or rather the light in which the British are looked upon. It is clear that in the first case the British merely constituted a ruling authority, and the Pindaris would have fought in the same way against any Indian ruling power, if it stood in the way of their loot and plunder, as they did with the English. In the second case, the British were simply non-Muslims who had usurped the

Muslim kingdom, and the Wahabis would, as they actually did, fight against any non-Muslim power in India with the same zeal as they showed against the English, if the security of religion demanded it. Thus the fight of the Pindaris and the Wahabis against the English cannot be regarded as struggle for independence, because to them the English stood as a symbol, either of ruling authority or of heretic religion, and not merely of an alien rule. In other words, they did not take up arms with the conscious and definite object of freeing India from foreign rule.

An analysis of historical examples would prove that a struggle for independence must have as its primary object the expulsion of foreign rulers, simply because they are foreigners, though there are usually many grievances against them which rouse the spirit of the people and impel them to such struggle.

In the detailed picture that has been given above of the popular upsurge, even in Rohilkhand and Awadh, two things emerge quite clearly. In the first place, it had nothing to do with the achievement of independence or freedom from British control, for that task was already done for the people by the mutinous sepoys. If there was any war, it was for maintaining and not gaining independence.

Secondly, during the period of independence, thus gained, there is unimpeachable evidence to show that the people were engaged in all kinds of subversive activities, and individuals classes, and States were fighting with one another for their own interests. On the other hand, one looks in vain for any evidence to show that the civil population realized the value and importance of the recovery of lost independence, and made an organized and determined effort to maintain it by evolving a suitable plan for defence. Anyone with a modicum of knowledge and common sense must have felt, that the avenging British forces were sure to come, sooner or later to recover the lost dominions. But contemporary evidence leaves no doubt that many eminent leaders and local chiefs who had established their authority, discounted even the very possibility of such a contingency.

Reference may be made in this connection to a Proclamation issued by Nana Sahib which has been regarded as 'unique.'[36] It begins by saying that 'the English who are "Kaffurs"...have been endeavouring to delude and convert the population of this country by inducing them to abandon their own religion and caste, but, having failed by mild means to do this, they were about to use force.' Then he goes on to say that 'tyranny,

wickedness and injustice having been much practised by the "Kaffur" English on the faithful and sin-fearing. I have been commissioned by God to punish the "Kaffurs" by annihilating them and to re-establish the Hindu and Mahomedan kingdoms, as formerly, and to protest our country, and I have conquered the country north of the Nurbuda river.' The Proclamation then refers to the very sad plight of the English. Not only did they lose India north of the Narmada, which was conquered by Nana, but they were 'quarrelling and fighting and killing each other': the French and the Russians 'have been sending armies by sea these three months past' 'to turn them (the English) out of Hindustan': 'the Chinese also have declared war against these "Kaffurs" and the latter having no army to send against the Chinese are much alarmed. The Persians, Afghans and Baluchis moreover are ready with their armies collected to aid us.' This Proclamation only provokes ridicule and contempt by the absurd claims made by Nana, but even taking the best view, Nana here assumes the role of the defender of Hindu religion. As the Proclamation ends with a threat to punish all those who would not join Nana on this occasion to drive away the English, it loses the character of a declaration of war of independence by the people, even if anybody seeks to put this complexion upon it.

There is thus no positive evidence in support of the view that the people were inspired by a sense of patriotism to fight for retaining the freedom of the country which they had obtained so cheaply and unexpectedly without having to wage any war. It has been urged that the very fact that the people and the chiefs fought heroically against the British when the days of retribution came, proves that they fought for independence. But, as has already been pointed out above, mere fight against the British does not constitute a war of independence. One must look to the object of the fight. In the particular case before us the most obvious inference is that the people fought for retaining what they had wrongfully secured, and for avoiding chastisement, unless there is clear evidence to show that they were inspired by patriotism or any such noble and disinterested motive. The protracted or heroic character of the resistance against the avenging British forces cannot, by itself, be regarded as such evidence. For the people had burnt their boats and had only two alternatives before them, either to fight or lose everything, including their lives in many cases. Besides, the incredible and indiscriminate cruelty with which the

masses were treated by the British must have told the people what to expect from them, and stiffened their backs.

[...]

It would thus appear that the outbreak of the civil population in 1857 may be regarded as a war of independence only if we take that term to mean any sort of fight against the British. But, then, the fight of the Pindaris against the English[37] and the fight of the Wahabis against the Sikhs in the Panjab should also be regarded as such. Those who demur to it should try to find out how much the rebels in 1857 were prompted by motives of material interest and religious consideration which animated, respectively, the Pindaris and the Wahabis, and how much by the disinterested and patriotic motive of freeing the country from the yoke of foreigners. Apart from individual cases here and there, no evidence has yet been brought to light which would support the view that the patriotic motive of freeing the country formed the chief incentive to the general outbreak of the people. It is therefore difficult to regard the outbreak of 1857 as a war of independence, far less a national movement of this type, at least in the present state of our knowledge.

In conclusion, attention may be drawn to the rebellion of Surendra Sai at Sambalpur in 1827[38] and that of the Santals in 1856.[39] If the later rebellion of the same Surendra Sai in 1857 for the same cause, and carried on in the same manner, may be regarded as a war of independence, there is no reason why the earlier rebellion should not be honoured by the same epithet. As regards the Santal rebellion, it would bear comparison with that of Shahabad[40] in 1857–8, as regards the intensity of anti-British spirit, organization, and geographical area. If, therefore, the isolated outbreaks in 1857 in different areas are to be regarded as war of independence, it is difficult to deny the same honour to the arduous struggle carried on by the Santals or Surendra Sai, and perhaps many others. [...] The outbreak of 1857 has, therefore, little claim to be hailed as the first war of independence.

On the whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the so-called First National War of Independence of 1857 is neither the First, nor National, nor a War of Independence.

The reasons why Indians at the beginning of the twentieth century held a different view of the Mutiny are not far to seek. The first and the foremost was, of course, the deliberate desire of the nationalist and

revolutionary parties to hold up before the people a concrete example of a grim struggle for freedom against the British which might serve as a precedent and inspiration for the new generation which was about to launch a similar campaign. But even if we leave aside this or similar sentimental ground, there were also historical reasons for interpreting the Mutiny in a different light. The people of the twentieth century were so much obsessed with the idea of *pax Britannica,* and so impregnated with a sense of British invincibility, that they could not bring themselves to believe that local people or chiefs could dare or choose to rise against the authority of the Government unless there was an impelling motive or a great organisation behind it. They could not visualise the fact that half a century before things were very different. The last embers of the anarchical conflagration, set ablaze by the fall of the Mughal Empire, had not yet died down, and during the first hundred years of British rule many local chiefs and primitive tribes did not hesitate to hurl defiance against the British authority. The chaos and anarchy in Central India were still within living memory. We have given above a detailed account of the series of civil outbreaks—some of them assuming serious proportions—that occurred during the period. It has also been shown down that some of the local revolts during the Mutiny were really continuations of earlier outbreaks, the authors of which, brought under control, found an opportunity in 1857 to renew the conflict under more favourable circumstances. Save in extent of area and their simultaneous character, the popular outbreaks during the Mutiny did not differ much from those that took place during the century preceding it. Both these distinguishing characteristics are easily explained by the facility and stimulus offered by the Mutiny. The people felt and perhaps rightly, that the whole authority of the British Government depended upon the vast force of the sepoys, and the tiny British force counted for little. They knew too little of the power of England, and recent reverses at Crimea suffered by the British at the hands of the Russians, of which very exaggerated accounts were afloat in India, made them belittle the power and might of the British Government. So when the Mutiny of sepoys took away the very prop on which the British rule in India rested, the people not unreasonably believed that their hour had come. We learn from both official and unofficial sources that the people did not raise their hands against the Government for a few days after the first outbreak of the mutiny at Mirat and Delhi, but the inability of the British to

restore their authority in Delhi and the ignominious flight of the British officers from the various stations naturally led them to believe that there was an end of the British rule in India. The tradition of the old days in the eighteenth century, when India was under Free Lances, had not altogether died down, and so we find a repetition on a smaller scale of what took place in Northern and Central India—the same zone that was affected in 1857—during the latter half of the eighteenth and to a certain extent, also far into the nineteenth century, in spite of the establishment of British rule. The anarchical political condition in Avadh—for it can hardly be regarded as anything else—under the Nawabs who were merely tools in the hands of the British[41] faithfully reflects this state of things.

Confirmation and illustration of what we have said above meet us at almost every step as we go through the detailed story of the outbreak of the civil population in 1857–8. Reference may be made, for example, to the state of Bundelkhand. No Indian ever thinks of the great outbreak of 1857 without conjuring up in his mind's eye the vision of the heroic struggle of the Rani of Jhansi, a young lady taking up arms with the cry '*mere Jhansi nehi denge*' (I will not give up my Jhansi), rallying the whole country to the fight for freedom, and dying sword in hand while fighting against the English. The actual state of affairs was, however, very different. It is not necessary to repeat what has been said above, about the part played by the sepoys and the Rani in the mutiny at Jhansi that took place early in June, 1857. But it is definitely known that the mutinous sepoys left for Delhi immediately after they extorted as much money from the Rani as they could, without any further care or thoughts of her. As soon as the sepoys left Jhansi and other places in the neighbourhood, and the British authority was liquidated, the Thakurs or landed chiefs of Jhansi thwarted the authority of the Rani, and to make matters worse, the hereditary enemies of her family such as the chiefs of Datia and Orchha invaded Jhansi. The poor Rani sent piteous appeals to the British Commissioner at Saugor for money and troops, and pointed out, after a detailed account of the situation, that without such help she could not hope to maintain her authority. As a matter of fact, for the next eight months, the Rani had to fight, not against the British for independence of India, but against her own neighbours and subjects for her very existence. We have got a fairly good picture of the state of Bundelkhand in those days—Indian chiefs fighting against one another, some of them befriending the English for securing their help against rival chiefs, others

helping the British at first then changing or forced to change their attitude by unjust suspicion of the latter, brought out in no small measure by the machinations of their Indian enemies; mutinous sepoys and even Tantia's troops fighting against Indian chiefs; the petty local chiefs busy with establishment of their own authority and enriching themselves by all unscrupulous means; plunder and murder going on all sides and security of life and property vanishing like a dream. This hardly fits in with the romantic picture of Jhansi as the centre of a national war of independence. And what about the heroic leader of this war? She had to carry on a fight against her own kinsmen and rival Indian chiefs, and to the very last, that is, till at least March, 1858, when the curtain was slowly falling over the great drama in Northern India, she was yet undecided whether she would fight against the British or make alliance with them. As a matter of fact, there are good grounds to believe that if the British Government of India had not taken up a definitely hostile attitude towards her owing to the malicious misrepresentations of the Rani of Orchha and others, and accepted her protestations of innocence, she would have readily handed over the district of Jhansi which she was managing on behalf of the British according to their directions, and would never have taken resort to arms against the British. Even when Sir Hugh Rose was marching with his force against Jhansi, there was a council of war, and one party was in favour of submission and the other party was for war. Even Tantia Topi is said to have advised her not to fight against the English. She agreed, and sent an agent to Hamilton, the representative of the Government of India accompanying the force of Hugh Rose. But, as the Commissioner had previously refused her overtures and did not even deign to reply to her letters, so Hamilton kept her agents as virtual prisoners in his camp without sending any reply. It was thus quite clearly evident to the Rani that her fate was sealed. She had then only two alternatives before her, either to surrender and face trial as a war-criminal for the massacre of British troops during the mutiny, or to die a heroic death in the battlefield; for even the greatest idiot then alive could not hope for the success of the revolt against the British after they had broken its backbone and had to face only a rally of straggling forces in isolated pockets. It reflects the greatest credit on the personality and character of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi that she chose the latter alternative and preferred to die with honour rather than willingly submit to a trial

on a charge of murdering the British, the outcome of which could never be in doubt. But nothing can be more erroneous than to associate her name with a struggle for independence, either of Jhansi or of India.

The condition of Avadh and Bundelkhand, sketched above, may be taken as fairly illustrative of that part of India where the revolt of the non-military element against the British took the most acute form. We cannot miss the analogy it offers to the anarchical condition which prevailed in India a century before. Indeed if we calmly review the whole situation without any prejudice or sentiment, we cannot but regard the civil outbreak in 1857 as belonging to that type which characterizes a political vacuum caused by the sudden removal of political stability, or destruction, true or imaginary, of the central political authority as a controlling factor. Viewed in this light the outbreak of 1857 would appear, not as the first phase of the war of independence, but as the last phase of India under Free Lances which commenced since the fall of the Mughal power. The miseries and bloodshed of 1857–8 were not the birth-pang of a freedom movement in India, but the dying groans of an obsolete aristocracy and centrifugal feudalism of the mediaeval age.

Many look upon the outbreak of 1857 as something sudden, unexpected, and unaccountable. But this is not a correct view. It is not generally recognized that *pax Britannica* took a century to develop and nothing like undisturbed peace prevailed over India during that time. [...] [A]ll the elements of discontent and disaffection which combined to produce the great conflagration in 1857 were not only present, but made themselves felt in sporadic outbursts, throughout the previous century. Only their unique combination and the vast scale of operations, made possible by the successful mutiny of the sepoys, distinguished the outbreak of 1857.

The mutiny of local sepoys was not a new things. There were no less than twenty previous occasions on which they had openly defied the authority of their officers. In particular the mutiny of soldiers at Vellore in 1806 shows, in all essential particulars, a strong analogy to the mutiny of 1857. The participation of civil population in the Mutiny was foreshadowed by the many instances of open resistance against the British. [...] The lawless elements which joined the Mutiny to serve their own ends and robbed alike the British and the Indians, were common factors in all outbreaks during the century preceding the Mutiny.

The challenge to British authority by leaders like Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Ahmadulla, Kunwar Singh, and others had precedents in the revolt of Chait Singh, Wazir Ali, Velu Thampi, and a score of others. [...]

In short the first century of British rule in India set the stage for, and witnessed many rehearsals, though in parts, of the great tragic drama which was to celebrate the centenary of its foundation in blood and tears.

NOTES

1. The relevant passages from these two British journals are quoted in *Krishtadas Pal* (p. 126) by N. Ghosh, as well as in the book (p. 1) referred to in the next note.

2. *The Mutinies, the Government and the People by a Hindu* (Calcutta, 1858). Though anonymous, it is now known to be the work of Kishorichand Mitra.

3. *The Mutinies and the People or Statements of Native Fidelity exhibited during the outbreak of 1857–8, by a Hindu* (Calcutta, 1859). Though anonymous, it is now known to be the work of Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya.

4. Harish Chandra Mukherji, *Bengal Celebrities*, p. 75.

5. Syed Ahmad Khan, *An Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt*, W.N. Lees (tr.), Calcutta, 1860, p. xvi.

6. Jiwanlal Munshi, Moinuddin, and Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya, mentioned above, p. 248, fn. 3; 330.

7. Jadunath Sarvadhikari, in his Bengali book *Tirtha-bhramana* (Pilgrimage), gives a long account of the mutiny and describes the oppression of the people by the sepoys in Varanasi and other neighbouring places.

8. Godse Bhalji recorded his impressions in a book entitled *Majha Prabas* (My Journey), which commenced in March 1857, and took him to various theatres of military operations. I am indebted to Dr A. D. Pusalker for having translated for me relevant portions of this Marathi book in English.

9. C.J. Griffiths, *Siege of Delhi*, London, 1910, p. 259.

10. Ibid.

11. Publisher's Note in the Edition of 1947, p. vii.

12. Kaye's Mutiny Papers preserved in the India Office Library, London, (henceforth MS. L.) Vol. No. 725, pp. 1011–16.

13. Parliamentary Paper, House of Commons. Accounts and Papers 1857–8. Vol. XLIII (p. 411—written in hand—there is no consecutive page-numbering).

14. See p. 131 of R.C. Majumdar.

15. C.L. Raikes, *Notes on the Revolt in North-Western Province of India*, 1858, p. 175.

16. Field Marshall Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, London, 1897, Vol.1, p. 119.

17. Mrs R.M. Coopland, *A Lady's Escape from Gwalior and Life in the Fort of Agra during the Mutinies of 1857*, London, 1859, p. 104.

18. G.W. Forrest (ed.), *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India*, IV. App. A, i. Sir Alfred Lyall, at that time a young civilian in the Agra Province, 'put the whole rebellion down to them (Muhammadans)' (Lovett, *A History of India, Nationalist Movement*, p. 14). The whole of the English Press in Calcutta regarded it as a Muhammadan rebellion (H. S. Cunningham, *Earl Canning*, p. 152).

19. Griffiths, *Siege*, 279–80.

20. Syed Ahmad Khan, *An Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt*, p. 9.

21. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, III, p. 288.

22. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, III, p. 290 ff. In addition to the two Proclamations of Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, we possess copies of Proclamations issued by Birjis Qadr of Awadh and Liaqat Ali of Allahabad, all urging the Muslims to rise against the English in the name of religion. The Proclamation issued under the seal of Birjis Qadr, Wali of Awadh, addressed to 'all the Muslims residing in Oudh, Rampur,Moradabad, etc.' begins with a quotation from the Quran from which it draws the conclusion that friendship with Christians is heresy and hence it is a duty of all the Muslims to make themselves inveterate foes of these Christians. Throughout, it contains the exhortation to the Muslims to rise against the English and extirpate them, by holding out the dire consequences that would follow to the Muslims if the English got victory. The Proclamation, issued by Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, appeals to both Hindus and Muslims to protect their religion and property from the Europeans. The other proclamations are also of a similar character.

23. C.T. Metcalfe, *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny at Delhi*. Westminister, 1898, pp. 98–9.

24. MS. L. Vol. 726, p. 313.

25. Printed Report by Taylor, dated 15th October, 1858. MS. L. Vol. 726, p. 826.

26. W.S. Blunt, *India under Lord Ripon*, London, 1909, p. 164.

27. H.G. Briggs, *The Nizam*, Vol. II, pp. 84–6.

28. Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny*, London, 1896, pp. 244–5. According to Malleson 'there were not a dozen land-owners in Oudh who had not, in some way or others, assisted the rebels, and that, therefore, there would be but few exceptions to the sweeping confiscations proposed by the Governor-General.' (G.B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, Vol. III, London, 1880, p. 251).

29. Syed Ahmad Khan, *An Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt*, pp. 47–8.

30. Anderson and Subedar, *The Last Days of the Company*, Vol. I, London, 1918, p. 112.

31. Ibid., p. 188.

32. The British Indian Association in Calcutta condemned the Mutiny in a formal resolution; many other public bodies sent petitions and addresses to the Government condemning the Mutiny. Illuminations and festivities were held at Agra on the fall of Delhi (Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, *NF*, pp. 220, 225, 288).

33. See above, pp. 396–7.

34. For his views quoted, cf. Raikes, *Notes*, p. 156 ff.

35. For the Pindaris, cf. *An Advanced History of India* (pp. 723–5) by R. C. Majumdar (and others).

36. *Freedom—Bombay*, I. 253. The text of the Proclamation is given in pp. 253–4.

37. This does not, of course, mean that the generality of the people who fought against the English for personal or material interest belonged to the category of the Pindaris. The object is merely to draw attention to the underlying principle by an extreme analogy. But one class of the civil population, who swelled the number of rebels, such as the Gujars, Banjars, Ranghars, and other similar predatory tribes, offers a close analogy to the Pindaris.

38. See p. 143.

39. See pp. 64–5.

40. See p. 141.

41. See pp. 13 ff.

Theories on the Indian Mutiny*

S. B. Chaudhuri

It will have been noticed that the bifurcation of the subject of the great revolt of 1857 into two distinct historical aspects, the military mutiny, and the civil rebellion, has the merit of a new approach and offers the most intelligible clue to a proper understanding and a rational evaluation of the main character of the revolutionary maelstrom. That the sepoys struck the first blow is not denied, that their grievances flowed independently of any external pressure and originated from the conditions of the existing military service also appear quite probable. But their apprehensions and fears about the intentions of the British to destroy their caste and religion were exactly those which troubled the minds of the civil population and the feudal aristocracy as well. This connects the two aspects of the revolt in the historical process. When the sepoys had created the field and attained a certain measure of success, sections of the aristocracy and certain civil elements put themselves at the head of the movement, with the result that the military complexion of the insurrection was changed. The change was bound to take place as the sepoys did not produce a single competent commander who could canalize the activities of the rebellious troops.[1] Naturally enough the initiative and leadership passed into the hands of civilian leaders who turned the movement to their advantage and even led the soldiery to the attack. The sepoys had no plan and resources either, it appears, of carrying on a protracted struggle under their own management, and in many cases they sought the help of the landed dignitaries and even coerced them into leading them if they wavered.[2] After the explosion at Meerut the mutinous troops made for Delhi where resided Bahadur Shah, the

*Previously published as Chapter Six in S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies*, Calcutta, World Press, 1957.

emperor according to the Indian legitimists, which gave the movement a traditional countrywide base. The local troops having in a large measure accomplished their plan of overthrowing the British authority in their respective regions proclaimed that the *hukumat* or authority belonged now to the country chief who had exercised it in the past.[3]

These are factors which irresistibly toned down the military character of the revolt and produced conditions favourable for the merging of the military rising into a popular rebellion. Few circumstances are more observable throughout the revolt than this ferment in the civil populace accompanying the Indian mutinies. Anything less than this (with so widespread a sepoy war to encourage honest and natural motives of a patriotic and territorial character) would have been extremely improbable in all conditions of political life, ancient or modern. A rumour that the British power was gone unsettled the minds of the people and the tremendous events of the time ignited the embers of all latent discontent.[4] Even as early as 21 May, the *Hindu Patriot* of Calcutta which was known for its moderate views observed:

> They mark not the demeanour of the Indian people at the present crisis.... There is not a single native of India who does not feel the full weight of the grievances imposed upon him by the very existence of the British rule in India—grievances inseparable from subjection to a foreign rule.[5]

If it was so, it was not unlikely that the British had to face a really national and revolutionary situation growing out of the mutinies. A sense of righteous indignation against the British, whose feelings are so different from those of the Indians and whose gods are so different, must have naturally flowed from the war of the mutinies which gave it the character of a just and righteous revolt, 'in reality a great and formidable rebellion', as Disraeli said in the House of Commons. Instead of being a partial military mutiny, a hectic revolt of the Bengal Army alone, the outbreak gradually approached the character of a rising of the people.[6]

The most immediate factor working out this change was the religious element which actuated the masses to sacrifice their lives. The many references to the jehads and the cry of religion in danger which was echoed and re-echoed in the 'seditious' proclamations of the period[7] entered into the composition of the upsurge.[8] The extreme ferocity of the mutineers at Meerut and in other places may be explained by the belief of the rebels that they were waging a religious war. The insurgents sacked the convents and slaughtered the missionaries, 'just as if they were Anglicans'.

Mrg. Persico, apostolic vicar of Agra, related that in his vicariat alone the rebels had destroyed a magnificent cathedral, twenty-five churches, two colleges, two asylums and five nunneries.[9] Madness produced by fanaticism often outweighed all other feelings. The excesses of Irish rebellions and the French revolution are pertinent in this connection. Very authentic intelligence obtained from Lucknow in the period between 25 November and 2 December runs:

> The war is now fully believed throughout Lucknow to be a religious crusade and numbers of people are flocking into the capital from the districts to take part in the struggle.[10]

Then Lucknow fell finally in March, the British authorities were struck by the overwhelming number of placards and pamphlets which were hung up in every nook and corner of the city urging the people to die for their caste and creed.[11]

The religious feeling mingled with the racial issue—the universal hatred of the English aliens which gave the revolt of 1857, a national colouring. By no wisdom, by no system, as one contemporary British officer says, could they have prevented the antagonism of race.[12] This aspect of the revolt, namely, the determination of the rebels to tear the English out of the land, root and branch, explains why the war in the last phases partook of the character of a war of extermination. That some of the Indians gave shelter to the Europeans or harboured good feelings towards them cannot be urged as conclusive against numerous proofs to the contrary. Kaye quotes from a writer of the *Calcutta Review* to show that the genius of the revolt was to destroy everything that could possibly remind one of England; the telegraph posts were dug out, and even the milestones, so decidedly English, were 'defaced'.[13] The innumerable manifestos offering rewards for the destruction of the English also support this contention.[14] British officials like Major Williams of Meerut, F. Thompson of Allahabad, and M. Thornhill of Mathura were convinced that as a rule the extirpation of the British was the object which prompted the rebels to adopt ruthless measures.[15] The massacre of the Europeans in the parade ground at Farrukhabad reflects the same sentiment. There was no proclamation to that effect. The day was rainy, yet there was a great assemblage of people to witness the dreadful spectacle.[16] In Delhi too, great crowds assembled to witness a similar scene on Saturday the 16th May.[17]

That the people in general were in sympathy with the rebels may also be judged from the selfless spirit which is seen on a large scale in different

regions of India during the epoch. Very few rebels craved for life or seemed to care to purchase it. They often courted death defiantly, like the Spartans.[18] What again was very remarkable was that the villagers did not betray their rebel leaders and very rarely, if ever, they earned 'blood money', even though habitually poor. Military communications bear out the fact that the British punitive forces were constantly misled and misinformed as they went out to elicit information for military reconnaissance. Lugard while pursuing Kunwar Singh was hampered and often troubled by the bellicose and nonchalant attitude of the villagers. A. Money, the officiating magistrate of Bihar going in pursuit of Ali Karim, found that the heart of the whole country was with the rebel and consequently could not get any assistance or information from the villagers regarding Karim's whereabouts, although he offered large rewards.[19] Many other officers entrusted with the same mission experienced a similar situation. In fact, from the rarity of the occasions on which the British forces were able to surprise the rebel forces, it seems more than likely that the rebels were helped by the villagers all around them who kept them acquainted with the movement of the enemy troops. It is also a noteworthy fact that during the mutinies the British military command established flying corps. This indicates that they commanded only the spots of ground held by their own troops in different scattered areas while for communication between the disjointed members of their army they depended on flying columns. They could depend neither on their sepoys nor on the country people to keep the communication lines open between the far-flung military posts. This is what the French had to go through in the Peninsular War in the face of the Spanish national rising. Apart from the fact that this military situation demonstrated the actual insufficiency of the British forces, it also brought into relief the prevalent spirit of disaffection. According to records, flying columns were scouring the Panjab, Rajputana, Central India, as well as Oudh.[20] All these are proofs of the fact that a vague feeling of patriotism lay behind the mutiny and rebellion of 1857. Official reports about men wandering in the guise of fakirs and unusual numbers of them appearing in the countryside tampering with the villagers or carrying correspondence between different bodies of mutinous sepoys concealed in their bamboo lathies or employed in other emissary or reconnoitering work are too well-known to require detailed references.[21] The government measures to combat this menace underline the dimension of the peril. Of a station in the Panjab, Cooper,

the deputy-commissioner of Amritsar, said that treason and sedition were dogged into the very privacy of the harem, and the sanctity of the mosques. He continues:

> As with the detectives of Vidocq, there were spies in the market-place, at the festival, in the places of worship, in the goals, in the hospitals, in the regimental bazars, among the casual knot of gossipers...among the bathers at the tanks, among the village circle round the well, under the big tree, among the stone breakers of the highways....[22]

The magnitude of the rebellion is manifest from the returns of persons tried and punished as furnished by the district officers. On 13 May, when it was known that the mutiny of the sepoys had been followed in many places by rebellion of the populace, the government lost no time to enact Act xi of 1857, to try persons guilty of rebellion, of waging war against the queen, and punish them with death. The rigour of the law was further extended by the Act xiv passed on 6 June by which provision was made for capital punishment of persons convicted of exciting mutiny or sedition. The series of Acts which followed namely Acts, xvi, xvii, and xxv of 1857, were in the nature of retributory measures to meet the challenge to the government from the civil populace. Not only mere martial law was not proclaimed but very extensive measures were taken for the summary trial of offending persons of every class of people, civil as well as military. Other severe measures were also adopted. Even burning of offending villages was considered a necessity where the mass of the inhabitants had committed a grave outrage and the perpetrators could not be traced.[23]

Such unlimited powers over life and death for the punishment of crimes, and the administration of law in its utmost severity, were considered unavoidable by the local officials if only to produce the requisite impression when the whole country was seething with opposition. So the work was carried on, to terrorise the teeming millions to submission and to establish fear and awe of the government.[24] Shortly after the outbreak, in the first phase of the revolt, every law of nature and man was set aside by the army of retribution. As Maude and Sherer who fought in the war frankly admitted, their feeling was not so much revenge as a desire to strike terror.[25] Indiscriminate slaughter of men, burning of whole tracts of inhabited country, blowing up of rebels by hundreds became general.[26] Whole lines of villages in the track of the

army were burnt down and for miles corpses hung from trees. R. H. Dunlop's punitive forces first killed all the males and then burnt down the village of Akulpur. The same happened in Busoudah, another village of Meerut.[27] Brigadier Neill's course from Benares to Allahabad was marked by corpses of villagers, and the riversides for miles presented an array of demolished houses. As he saw it, the rising was becoming something more than a military mutiny and he had not the tenderness to deter him from striking root and branch 'the people who were rising into rebellion on the ruins of the Native Army.'[28] A message dated 6 July runs: 'The trunk road now passes through a desert, the inhabitants having fled to a distance of four or five miles.' In Arrah, in consequence of the general nature of the rebellion obtaining there, the wholesale burning and destruction of all villages was recommended.[29] Similar atrocities were perpetrated on the villages of Iradat Jahan in Jaunpur.[30] Colonel Forster while moving on to Porahat destroyed over thirty villages and seized all the grain stored there.[31] In Palamau the whole punitive force was fed entirely at the expense of the bhogtas.[32]

Instances of this nature need not be multiplied, but the few given above would show that the war of the mutinies was turned into a war of revenge and extermination. The violence of the British press rose to great heights. *The Englishman* of Calcutta wrote that sufficient vengeance had been taken at Delhi, but a long account of blood yet remained to be settled,[33] and for this inadequate requital the *Times* of London cried out for inflicting a terrible retribution, to destroy the 'whole of this foul, craven mob',[34] that upon the standard of England 'vengeance' and not 'justice' should be inscribed.[35] To the licentious fury of the British soldiers[36] was added the fiendish spirit of the special commissioners. Rajas and nawabs were strung up as also men of less note in large numbers, and no estimate was attempted of the number, as Russell says, who perished by the civil sword.[37] This produced disastrous results. The wholesale immigration of the Indians overseas commenced from this period. Terror-stricken, the populace migrated especially for Mauritius. In 1850, they numbered twelve thousand, five hundred sixty-two, but at the end of 1857, the Indian population of the island was one lakh, seven thousand, and seventy-two males and thirty-five thousand, four hundred, and sixty-two females.[38] The policy of unreasoning vengeance, the abdication of the government function in favour of a 'committee of butchers', produced other results.[39] A sense of exasperation drove the rebels to band together in large numbers

with a view to retaliation. This brought on a deadlock. The people, particularly the agricultural classes, were prevented from returning to their occupations.[40] In his communication to the Court of Directors of 11 December, 1857, Canning referred to the chronic disaffection of the villagers and the readiness with which they renewed their rebellious activities, attesting the ill-effects of this remorseless bloodshed. This was confirmed by perfectly trustworthy accounts. Some days later, on 24 December, Canning again represented to the Court of Directors that the undue action of the civil authorities could not be checked—indiscriminate hangings and burning and plunder of villages had given colour to the view that the government meditated a general bloody prosecution. Consequently, the mutiny which, he argued, at the beginning was little more than a military revolt was fast growing into a widespread and implacable feud between the 'agricultural classes and their civil rulers'. He referred to many official and unofficial communications on this anarchical condition which besides aggravating the rebellion had brought cultivation to a standstill, and concluded with the expression of a sentiment worthy of the noble 'Clemency' Canning,

> (No) Government can punish in anger...and that the Government which has punished blindly and revengefully will have lost its chief title to the respect of its subjects.[41]

All these official missives show that the government of India, at least so far as these records are concerned, did not look upon the events of 1857–8 from a particular racial angle, but in their proper perspective, only in the context of a vast upsurge of people. The assumption that the mutiny was actually a popular rebellion indicated the level at which it was to be tackled. Many officers applied themselves to the task of mitigating the tension by removing the causes of exasperation of the civic communities. William Muir, Secretary to the Government of North-West provinces, writing to district officers, on the subject of 'means of revenue' on 10 April, 1858, cautioned them to confine their demand to the *kharif* instalment, that is, those for November and December only. This virtually amounted to an admission of the legitimate *de facto* tenure of the usurping rulers in the preceding months, when the landlords had withheld payment to the British treasury. The officers were further advised to take into account the financial condition of the proprietors, who were favourably disposed in the matter of payment of revenue. It would be inexpedient, he

emphasized, to 'trench upon their capital' already wasted by plunder and rapine.[42] But on this point a controversy was raging between two experienced officials regarding the propriety of the measure which brings into clear relief some of the issues of the civil rebellion. In the Mathura district over one hundred and fifty villages had been confiscated and transferred to other hands for default of payment of revenue[43] in addition to the usual penalties of death and destruction for the commission of revolutionary acts. M. Thornhill, the officer of the district, justified this measure on the ground that this passive resistance to pay revenue to the government was more difficult to deal with than active opposition. As a matter of fact he treated this contumacious refusal to pay as rebellion and visited it with confiscation.[44] G.F. Harvey, as already referred to, considered this measure of Thornhill to be indiscreet and imprudent. Such transfers of large estates for balances of revenue to quasi-loyal landholders who were utter strangers to the land would only generate further feelings of hostility to the government by increasing the number of ousted landowners. This coercive process was also considered to be extremely unrighteous having regard to the practical difficulties involved in the matter of payment at a time when the whole country was swarming with rebels, the tahsil offices subverted, and the British struggling precariously in a few beleaguered posts. It could not be expected that the unprotected malguzar should become such a 'miracle of loyal devotion' as to risk their lives in carrying *kists* to the government camp.[45] The fact that many people suffered, and were even punished capitally for the simple reason that they were forced to submit to the rebel authorities, in consequence of the English failing to afford protection, created resentment also in the British circles.[46] Better sense, however, came to prevail with the authorities at a later time when the first blast of mutiny was over. R. H. Davies of Azamgarh wrote on 3 February, 1858, that the number of men implicated in the commotion was so great that if law was allowed to take its course the jails would not hold them. He suggested some sort of clemency in view of the excitement and temptation born of or brought on by subversion of authority. An official circular was issued on 8 March, drawing the attention of the local authorities to the Governor-General's intention of making a distinction between subversive acts aimed to overthrow the British power and acts of plunder and violence of a non-political nature when the restraining power of the government was in abeyance.[47]

It is notorious that the British were within an ace of losing India.[48] They were at the end of their tether, so to say, and applied all means to survive the crisis. European planters were recruited to run the different services. Serious attention was given to organise the *goalas, dosads* and *lathials,* and other such rabble into a force of footmen.[49] Nearly ten thousand fighting men of the *ghatwal, tabedar,* and *jagirdar* class living in the tract between Burdwan and Hazaribagh were proposed to be requisitioned[50] and so also the Kukis of Assam.[51] European sailors of Calcutta were formed into a 'little navy army' and posted in different centres.[52] A number of seamen confined in the jail of the Bombay Presidency were said to have been released on condition of their promising to join the Indian Navy.[53] Influences were brought to bear upon the mahajans and zamindars to form combinations and to counteract the hold of the rebel leaders.[54]

The financial position was extremely desperate as already noticed. The Company begged for loan in different quarters and fell back on contributions received from chiefs and a few interested persons in some periods of the struggle.[55] The revenue receipts in the period naturally fell. A glance at the statement[56] of land revenue demand, collections and balances in the districts of the Agra division (towards the end of October 1858), as given below will show that the authority of the government was still disregarded with impunity, and was not yet firmly re-established.

Districts	Demands for October, 1858 (In Rs)	Collections for October, 1858 (In Rs)	Balance for October, 1858 (In Rs)
Muttra	4,272–6–8	319–1–7	3,959–5–0
Agra	8,493–5–0	1,783–5–0	6,710–0–0
Farrukhabad	2,25,415–7–11	7,300–10–10	2,18,114–13–1
Mainpuri	1,13,596–11–2	9,770–12–8	1,02,826– 2–6
Etawah	1,09,468–2–5	13,721–2–4	95,747–0–1

Making allowance for the difficulties of the time which prevented the loyal elements to send money to the coffers of the government, it cannot but be admitted that a considerable portion of the landed class was certainly influenced by a feeling of uncertainty as to the tenure of the British which kept them back.[57] But whatever the reasons, revenue receipts at several treasuries in the Benares and Allahabad divisions during October

and November show that the collection was seriously affected by the continuance of the rebellion.[58]

Let us turn to the economic consequences of the sepoy war and the rebellion. The immediate reaction of the outbreak was that early in the month of June public securities had fallen exceedingly low at Lucknow, and Gubbins, the Financial Commissioner, was informed that government promissory notes of one hundred rupees were offered for sale for half that sum, or even at, eighty-five or eighty-eight per cent discount. No merchant could negotiate a *hundi* or bill and all credit was gone, so much so, that the government was obliged to issue orders that officials should not, till things looked up, be paid in full.[59] Rees further says that no credit was given by Indians to Europeans. The anxious manner in which the former desired to part with Company's paper showed that they had lost all faith in the stability of the government. People laid in large stores to meet the impending crisis.[60] The demand for gold[61] rose as the mutinous sepoys were anxious to exchange silver for gold. Similar effects were produced on the Bombay money market. An immediate panic seized the Indian capitalists, very large sums were withdrawn from the banks and government securities proved unsaleable.[62] Effects of these proceedings were felt also in Bihar about the same time. The district officer of Champaran informed the authorities on 20 June that the indigo planters and others engaged in the trade were in great difficulty as the bankers and mahajans were refusing to make their usual cash advances.[63] As this unsettled condition reacted heavily on cultivation, every endeavour was made by the government to check any tendency towards agricultural depression. The Governor-General wrote to the Court of Directors on 16 July on the necessity for encouraging and inducing the people to return to their villages and cultivate their fields.[64] The Collector of Allahabad strained every nerve to promote cultivation so as to compensate the loss of grain caused by fire and plunder and stoppage of the import of the commodity from Rohilkhand. Difficulties were enhanced by the fact that cultivation was not possible in deserted villages and even where the people returned, it was too late in the season for a plough to be put to the ground.[65] The inland river trade was entirely suspended as the Oudh talukdars completely commanded the course of the Ganges between Allahabad and Cawnpore. No boats could ply above Allahabad and the usual trade from Farrukhabad and Rohilkhand was suspended.[66] Shortage of food came in the wake of these dislocations. Already in the month of

August reports were received of the great increase in the price of articles of consumption.[67] In the month of October scarcity reached the peak and great distress prevailed in Benares and the neighbouring regions of which a report was given by F.B. Gubbins, the commissioner, in the same month. He writes:

> The price of grain continues to be as high as during the last week; and the misery of the lower classes is rather increasing than otherwise. Children are now openly sold at one rupee per head to any one that will take them, while many others are abandoned by their parents on the highways.[68]

The government credit remained low, its papers being negotiated at thirty-four per cent discount in the Cawnpore market.[69] In eastern India opium advances had commenced in October though not in the Shahabad region.[70] Towards the end of the year securities were at the lowest ebb. It was then well-nigh impossible to borrow upon them. To make matters worse, nearly five hundred millions sterling were invested in railways. A depression in these stocks naturally caused alarm among European and American bankers who held enormous sums therein. A Mirzapur report of 7 December indicated that the mahajans had stopped all business and that drafts of the best description could not be placed at four times the usual rate of discount. Incidentally, the life insurance companies also passed through a terrible ordeal. On a modest calculation four-fifths of the officers of the Bengal Army were insured and about one thousand persons perished at Cawnpore alone. Naturally, the magnitude of the death-claims was beyond the capacity of these institutions to meet.[71] Sambalpur experienced another difficulty. Salt trade had almost ceased since the outbreak and no funds were available to meet even administrative demands.[72] All these features, though not treated in details, are sufficient to indicate that the economic system was thrown out of gear like the political one. The collapse of authority was also reflected in many other spheres of public life. Education was either stopped or interrupted, civil justice could only be exercised in a few isolated spots, public works absolutely ceased, and the survey had to be suspended.[73]

The scene of alarm, scarcity, and distress presented here brings into prominence the revolutionary character of the objectives of the rebels. It was sure enough not a mere wish to humble and humiliate the British government. The total subversion of the British authority in many sectors was only matched by the establishment of a rebel government of a

determined character aiming to replace the former rule in all aspects, though many forms were not changed as new ones could not be devised on account of the exigency of the times. Otherwise most of the new governments aimed at justice and equality and embodied to a great degree the spirit of the times. The rani of Jhansi proved herself a most capable ruler.[74] Mohammed Hasan of Gorakhpur was equally forceful in the administration of law and order. In regard to Farrukhabad, W. G. Probyn reported:

> The procedure for the criminal court was also detailed, and very great care, it appears, was bestowed on the suppression of crime. A monthly report from the thanadar was ordered to be sent in a prescribed form...and the Register of daily occurrences (Roznamcha) was ordered to be despatched each evening from the thanas.[75]

Every article of food and every other thing was taxed, the income from which averaged above rupees five hundred a day, but such impositions, as Probyn ascertained, did not cause the slightest vexation or annoyance.[76] It however appears quite plausible to maintain that nowhere during this period was any attempt made to establish the principles of democracy and self-government in the administration of the country. Ideas of a free and independent government meant nothing further than the restoration of the power of the local chiefs and were not conceived in the context of the repudiation of the monarchical principle. India in the mid-nineteenth century did not possess the material requisites for advanced political ideas and the insufficiency of her economic life rendered impossible any real extension of the revolution. Nor was there any social servile war, an uprising of the lower against the higher classes.

But this does not mean that the people in general were incapable of social and political initiative. The civil rebellion of the mutinies was mainly a talukdari movement. The movement was a challenge to the British system of law, revenue, production, and property relations. It repudiated the British policy of transferring the ownership of land to a new set of proprietors, the auction purchasers and the village headmen. Evidence in support of this contention has been profusely noticed in the preceding pages. Kaye quotes Henry Tucker to show that in Benares a few days sufficed to produce a revolution of property—so sudden a rising of the ousted landholders as could never have been thought of. The settlement of the North-West provinces, a great triumph of the British administration, had similarly

collapsed, suddenly resulting in a revolution of landed property.[77] Most conspicuous in these proceedings were the Oudh talukdars who, as already recorded, ever since Havelock's repeated failures to reach Lucknow, helped themselves in seizing the villages from which they had been wrongfully deprived.[78] By the end of September the whole country between Gopiganj and Allahabad was in the hands of the Oudh talukdars who were acquiring quite systematically village after village[79] and collecting rents.[80] The long list of the forcible seizure of villages by the ex-zamindars, as furnished by Mayne,[81] as also many other isolated instances bring out in clear relief much of the social content of the rebellion of the mutinies. In February 1858, G. Couper, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Oudh, reported that the powerful landholders were determined to resort to their posts and carry on a guerilla warfare until they get back their former estates.[82] This is an evidence of great value in that it explains how the war in Lucknow was converted into a war of the talukdars and the renewal of the struggle in a more intensive form against the confiscation proclamation of Canning.

Yet the rebellion of 1857 was not the work of the dispossessed talukdars alone. The war of the talukdars was made possible only by the co-operation of the general mass of people, the country people, the villagers of different social status. A very singular circumstance which was apparent and worthy of consideration was that the low castes and the cultivators who received attention at the hands of the British government displayed the most marked hostility to it.[83] In Oudh the British were fighting not a mutiny, but the revolt of a people under its hereditary chiefs[84] and leaders. In Budaun the mass of the population rose in a body and the work of rebellion after the sepoys had left, passed into the hands of the rural elements.[85] In some parts of Saharanpur, as Kaye was able to find out from the materials at his disposal, even the sepoys were regarded as protective elements by the British as against the inhabitants of towns and villages who turned out fiercely: the British officer could hardly realise this rapid change amongst the peaceful villagers.[86] In Deobund, the resistance offered by the townspeople had been determined and the rebels were numerous.[87] In Mathura the whole country had risen almost instantaneously, immediately after the outbreak of the sepoys.[88] The authorities at Ghazipur were resisted by villagers who were organized in bodies of thousands in July 1857.[89] Sherer, the magistrate of Fatehpur, while leaving the station and wandering in search of a place of safety, found the peasantry of the countryside in a ferment, in a state of *Jacquerie*

of the agricultural type.[90] The people of Jehanabad (Bihar) were also in open rebellion.[91] All official sources agree in stating that in Allahabad the peasantry rose at once under their old talukdars, specially the rural population of the Doab, and 'all the muscle and sinew of the agricultural races' were arrayed against the government.[92] In Rewah the whole of the population was hostile[93] and and country was secured only by the courage and resourcefulness of captain Osborne.[94] In Shahabad the rebellion of the people was found to be most determined and protracted of its kind. The Sagar and Narmada countries were in a blaze, seditious conspiracies were fomented in Belgaum, Hyderabad, and Poona and popular risings took place in far distant Kolhapur, Savantvadi, and Nargund. The commotion at the last named place took the form of a national resistance.[95]

This sample survey taken of this vast and sombre scene of rebellion may confirm the view that the so-called mutiny of 1857 has an internal consistency, only if we regard it as both a mutiny and a rebellion unmistakably united.[96] In general, popular risings were excited by military disturbances yet sometimes the fermentation appeared on the surface even without them. It is, however, not very easy to determine the duration of these occurrences, nor the sequence in which one act of revolt followed another but in most of the districts, as shown in the present work, elements of revolt and embers of disaffection continued to smoulder long after their re-occupation by the British. There is no gainsaying the fact that rebellion gripped many parts of India; even where agitation was not violent, there was no mistaking the unrest in people's minds and it is to be doubted if all acrimony was spent quickly. The village people were not certainly properly organized, and too often they broke out into small parties without any competent leadership, yet they fought heroically and even showed capacity for co-ordinated action. Captain Harrison of Dunbar's party in the expedition against Arrah said that the people of the country turned against them.[97] Mention of the villagers being recruited in the rebel army frequently occurs in official papers[98] and increasingly as the revolt progressed, they replaced the sepoys and formed the bulk of the fighting forces. They actively participated in the revolt without bothering much about their destiny and were not dismayed in any way by fear of the coming retribution. Such an attitude cannot be inspired simply by the temptation to take advantage of the disappearance of all authority attendant on the mutinies. The rapidity with which the revolt developed, the preparedness of the villages to accept rebel authority,

and the extensive plundering of many places suggest a readiness for revolt,[99] the rebellion of a united people against the state. In Meerut, for instance, as Major Williams the Commissioner of military police who collected a vast amount of evidence on the subject of the rising reported that the situation was perfectly normal on that fateful day, the shops open, the vendors plying and travellers journeying unarmed, but fearful scenes were enacted the same day in the afternoon and soon the country rose.[100] In Mathura according to official reports the people were in profound tranquility a month before the outbreak but this sudden change to anarchy struck the magistrate as incomprehensible.[101] Similarly in Benares, the suddenness with which the rebellion developed in the interior was astounding. It was not due to the instigation of the sepoys, as Kaye says,

> but a great movement from within was beginning to make itself felt upon the surface of the rural Society, and all traces of British rule were rapidly disappearing from the face of the land.[102]

So also in Allahabad, the character of the general rising of the people was such that it could not have been any the stronger and more formidable even if it had been skilfully planned and deliberately matured.[103]

In all convulsions popular fury is naturally directed against the institutions of their oppressors and throughout the rebellion the first thing the rebels did on getting a footing in a station was to burn the government offices and property.[104] Usually records of every description were destroyed, as these were regarded as the machinery by which the British enforced taxation.[105] Police stations, tahsils, and telegraph poles were also targets to attack,[106] but there seemed to be an especial rage against the railway lines which were thrown out[107] and a great fear of the engines which were battered to pieces.[108] But it has been sufficiently demonstrated that plunder was not the inducement to disaffection in many cases as the villagers were found to be wealthy and their resources strong.[109] In Saharanpur, the zamindars were one with the lower orders and rebellion and not plunder prompted their activities. There the rebels were content not merely to burn or destroy the baniya houses and throw the accounts into the flames, but the account books were carried out of the town with them and torn up in the highways. The same thing happened at Mathura.[110]

There is no indication in the official papers of the role the class of wage earners of Indian society played in the great revolt of 1857.

Nevertheless a few details are available. There were some factories lying scattered in the whole country and coffee and indigo plantations run by Europeans, where a working class allied to the toiling population must have worked. The dismantling of the factories at Shahjehanpur, Saran, and Hazaribagh and the wholesale destruction of indigo factories at Shahabad and in many other places as already noticed,[111] were a challenge to the system of exploitation and the instruments of production—the primitive demand of the nascent proletariat. The fact that a proclamation had to be issued by the government for the recovery of indigo seed only serves to underline the resentment of this class against the planters[112] and the cultivation of cash crop in general. Little is known of the facts relative to the social composition of the rebels. In general they may be classified as people who lived by profession of arms, agricultural workers, religious mendicants and priests, civil servants, shopkeepers, boatmen, and other professionals of this type. The commercial and industrial classes, the bankers, and mahajans, were on the side of order and government and were the targets of attack in almost every place. So universal was this feature that G. H. Freeling of Banda could not help reporting that in no instance the bankers and traders, the class favoured by them, had been able to keep their own in the struggle.[113] But the influence of the big 'native princes' and chiefs operated in a different direction. They actively sided with the government, and strangled the revolution and utilized only such results of this countrywide upsurge as were of advantage to them. Had they joined the movement, no earthly power, as Colvin said, could have saved the British from destruction.[114] The pillars of Indian feudalism kept aloof from the revolt so often characterized as feudal.

A very significant feature of the movements of the rebel leaders was that they did not confine their activities merely to their respective regions but moved to the neighbouring areas to carry on the general struggle against the English. Not to speak of the military operations of the Fyzabad maulavi, Firuz Shah, Tantia Topi, the rani of Jhansi, Rao Sahib and Kunwar Singh, a host of other leaders also made themselves conspicuous in many fronts of the war throughout the whole of upper-India. Thus Madho Singh of Bhognipur was reported to have joined the rebels at Kalpi after the re-occupation of Cawnpore by the British. Beni Bahadur Singh of Nasratpur with a 'halter round his neck' fought at Allahabad and later on joined the ranks of the rebels at Lucknow. Mehndi Hasan of Sultanpur dominated over the districts surrounding Oudh and surrendered only when the struggle was nearly over. Rana Beni Madho Baksh of Sankarpur

struggled to the last and fled to Nepal rather than accept the amnesty out of his loyalty to the royal begam and the same stand was taken by Mohammed Hasan of Gorakhpur who carried his arms as far as the borders of Fyzabad. Prithvipal Singh covered a wide field of military operations. Mansabali fought many a smart action resisting the advance of British forces all the way from Cawnpore to Lucknow on the one side and on the other in the Sultanpur road. Liakatali of Allahabad stuck to the last fighting in many fields. The palwar chief Madhoprasad of Birhar extended his activities as far as Azamgarh. Udresh Singh was present in the fight at Lucknow, Gorakhpur, and Azamgarh and similarly, Amresh Singh of Akbarpur, came to the support of the rebels at Gorakhpur and Azamgarh and very similar were the activities of another rajcoomar chief Chandresh Singh. When Kunwar Singh was on his historic march to Kalpi, Amar Singh stirred out of Shahabad to help him[115] and when the old lion was digging in at Azamgarh, Pargan Singh, Indrajit Singh, and Rana Beni Madho and others assembled together to take their force over the Gogra.[116] In the country to the south of the Jumna, Barjor Singh dominated the entire region from Kunch to Kalpi and the Sagar leader Daulat Singh swept through Jalaun, Jhansi, Hosangabad, and Rajputana. There are many other instances to show that the leaders of the rebellion looked beyond their own immediate circle and showed a combination of wide vision and patriotic solidarity. Though they were mostly engaged in local rebellion, they frequently united their forces against the English in many sectors of the war to deliver the country as a whole, and not simply parts of it, from the yoke of the British rule.

This combination is all the more remarkable as it cut across all barriers of caste and creed, and of regions and provinces, and united the Hindus and the Mahomedans—despite communal flare-up here and there which broke out during this period—[117] in a common endeavour to shake off the fetters of British rule and demonstrate their hatred of the regime in a perfectly national way. Disraeli's attack against the government in the House of Commons on 27 July was typical of the British imperialists whose motto was divide and rule, yet it was an admission of the fact:

> For the first time in the history of your rule, you have the Hindu and Mahomedan making common cause against you.[118]

The numerous proclamations of the time which urged the people to combine and slay the British,[119] added with the measures adopted by Bahadur Shah,[120] the nawab of Furrukhabad, and Khan Bahadur Khan

of Bareilly and many others to placate the Hindus, roused to a great extent, a new feeling, a feeling of solidarity which reached its peak during the seige of Lucknow when in the face of a great impending danger the Hindus swore of the Ganges and the Mahomedans on the *Koran* and rushed out, crying *chalo bhai*, to wipe out the English at Alambagh.[121] Similarly at Delhi it was a national defence which the British confronted. Colvin informed Havelock that the spirit in which both Hindus and Mahomedans acted together at Delhi was very remarkable.[122] W. Tayler of Patna communicated to the government that the letters discovered in the house of Peerali Khan disclosed that for the purpose of the successful execution of the conspiracy a common cause was made by merging all religious differences.[123] At Jhansi the Mahomedans were wholly on the side of the rani. Even in Rohilkhand, where communal tension prevailed, efforts of all kinds were made to raise the Hindu population against the British.[124] On this question of a common opposition to British rule by the Indian populace in those memorable years the evidence is of so compelling a nature that to Forest, the historian of the mutiny, the great revolt only pointed to the stark fact that the British dominion rested on a thin crust. He observes:

> Among the many lessons which the Indian Mutiny conveys to the historian and administrator none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a revolution in which Brahmin and Sudra, Mahomedan and Hindu, were united against us.[125]

Contemporary sources refer to similar other instances of social brotherhood which was remarkably exhibited in a number of places.

The commencement of the revolt at Meerut and the spread of the infection of mutiny and rebellion with a bewildering rapidity made it evident that the British government had acquired but a slight hold upon the affections of its Indian subjects.[126] England's dominion in India was indeed built by the sword and also upheld by the reliance on it. The rule of a century might have produced other strings for its upkeep, but the events of May-June demonstrated that it had no other firm support excepting the sword. That unfortunately was the result of the British policy, for by the end of that period certain trends were emerging out of the confused mass of events which indicated that the mutiny was gradually merging into a rebellion. In a sense all mutinies turn into a mass movement when they attain a certain measure of success but the Indian mutinies

of the year 1857 had the peculiar feature that the rebel Bengal Army had from the beginning drawn the sympathies of the countrypeople. 'The sepoys were not so much the avengers of professional grievances as the exponents of general discontent'.[127] They revolted against the authority, which they had sworn to obey, on grounds of national interest. The justification of sacrificing the military obligations rested on a widely based belief that their religion was in danger and, since they were children of the soil, though mercenaries and had not abnegated their obligations to the country, their countrymen viewed them as martyrs to a great cause, holy and national, and as a district magistrate said, willingly supplied their wants in almost all instances.[128]

Macaulay in his last two volumes of English history said that the violence of revolutions is generally proportioned to the degree of maladministration which produced them. The excesses committed by the Indians only explain their frantic attempts to throw off the yoke of their foreign masters whom they considered to be their oppressors. Such observations as the rebels were not actuated by a feeling of patriotism,[129] and that the mutiny was only an outbreak and not a revolt,[130] really do not cover all the issues of this human tempest. Another writer ignores the national content of the revolt on the ground that revolution is easy in a country where the vast majority of the population is agricultural as it was in France.[131] The analogy with France does not hold good, as the fact of foreign domination in India gave edge to the grievances of a social nature which widened the basis of the revolt. In fact, of the rebellion as a whole, it is not quite easy to present a uniform pattern as it differed considerably from region to region, and political and social motives got mixed up in the process. The total subversion of the British military control in India was undoubtedly the objective of the military classes. The subversion of the British system of administration in all its aspects by the abasement of the British rule to its utmost extent, its extinction if it could be managed, was the ruling motive in general of the non-military classes. The interaction of the two ideas, increasingly as the mutiny was turned into a rebellion, generated such a wave of popular feeling as can fairly be distinguished with the name of a national movement in its incipient form.

The conversion of the mutiny into a popular rebellion has been doubted by many scholars both Indian and British of contemporary and later periods. The greatest protagonist of the theory that the revolt of 1857 was only a mutiny of troops was William Muir, Secretary to the Government

of North-West provinces. His thesis was that it was essentially a military mutiny, a struggle between the government and its soldiers. From the lack of excitement in some places, and welcome given to British soldiers in other places, and sundry other signs of returning loyalty of the people as reflected in improved collections, from the desertions from the rebel forces, the loyalty of the Panjabis, the splendid crop of a few isolated stretches and above all, from the occasional manifestations of communal distemper, he argues that there was no controversy between the people and the government.[132] This amounts to a negation of the fundamental proposition of the present work. If there was no controversy between the people and the government, then the latter would not have committed inhuman atrocities upon the unarmed populace as is evident from the details recorded above. In a vast upsurge like the revolt of 1857 engulfing a major portion of a sub-continent like India, variations and fluctuations of conditions cannot be regarded as anything unusual and should not have any undue bearing on the overall historical estimate. The faulty nature of the observation of Muir is also made clear in his remark on the revolt of Mathura. He says: 'The most remarkable proof of the people being not opposed to us is found in Muttra'.[133] The report of Mark Thornhill, the British officer of the station who certainly had more opportunities to watch the situation than Muir who depended only on reports, however, gives a different version.[134] The picture Muir gives of Saharanpur[135] again appears to be a twisted one when seen in the light of Robertson's *District Duties*.

A very trite argument which is used to question the popular character of the revolt is that the proportion of the civil populace who joined the rebellion was insignificant when compared with those whose sympathies were with the government. F. Williams, the Commissioner of the Meerut division, for instance, furnishes a table of the population of Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, and Meerut and of the troops stationed in each of these districts, the former overwhelmingly in excess of the latter, and concludes that had the mass of population joined, those small bands could not have held out.[136] This view, namely that a considerable section of the people even of the affected regions remained sympathetic to the English, has been echoed and re-echoed in many contemporary and later works.[137] It is of course evident and is not disputed that in many districts quite a few of the chiefs and landholders, large sections of the common people, and specially the English-educated classes, actively supported the government in their trial.[138] The peculiar feature of the mutiny, as Kaye

says, was that though the English were fighting against the Indians, they were in reality sustained and supported by them.[139] But these circumstances are of a nature which do not touch the fringe of the problem[140] and are of value only in that they enable us to understand better how the English came out successful in their contest. In most of the convulsions of history, the brunt of the struggle is borne by a small portion of the population,[141] and the fact that rebellions against foreign rule, parallel in causation, character, and extent to the revolt in India, have occurred in the past and are occurring even now, should counsel caution in all calculations about the nature and extent of the revolt. As for the princely order and the various ruling chiefs who materially helped the British cause, it is well to consider that the loyalty of this class with the difficulties and dangers attending them only brings out in bold relief and renders more prominent the universal rebellion round them.[142]

The very facile argument that the rebellion that emerged was the rebellion of the riff-raff and other disturbing elements of society who enriched themselves by all unscrupulous means was one which was used mostly by the contemporary British press and writers to play down the popular content of the sepoy mutiny. Even Indians like Syed Ahmed Khan freely spoke of robbers and dacoits in the context of the rebel leaders.[143] This view however did not find favour with Kaye, Malleson, and Forrest who were the first series of mutiny scholars to discover the enormity of the issues of the great revolt and could not necessarily advocate such lame theories. But the notion still persisted and Holmes, the author of the 'best history of Sepoy Mutiny' according to V. A. Smith, allowed his imperialist sentiments to outweigh other considerations of historical studies in at least one page in his great work. But even a great work cannot possibly redeem such an unbalanced observation:

> ...just as a general mutiny of the London police would be followed by a violent outburst of crime on the part of the London thieves and roughs, so would the talukdars, the dispossessed land-holders, the gujars and the budmashes of India have welcomed the first symptom of governmental weakness as a signal for gratifying their selfish instincts.[144]

It has been shown that the support extended by Holmes to the theory of Innes in respect of the non-belligerency of the Oudh talukdars has not been substantiated by adequate evidence.[145] This when read along with the above remarks points to a trend of thought which characterized the

early school of mutiny scholars. Robber bands, the riff-raff, and others of this tribe certainly joined in the Indian revolt as they do join in every country whenever law and order is threatened. We may search all history in vain for a movement of emancipation which was not joined by people harbouring impure motives. But the foregoing pages must have shown that there were many others, possibly the bulk of rebels, who were not robbers by profession but people of decent social status to whom the revolt appeared to be the only legitimate means of redressing their grievances. Many scholars following Holmes and Raikes have preferred to express similar views.[146] But British official papers themselves, as shown in this work, point to a different estimate. A very simple but a substantially correct appraisal of the situation may be found in the following lines:

> The question whether the mutiny was a mere military revolt or a popular rising when calmly considered leads to the conclusion that the army revolted, the population left to itself committed overt acts of hostility against the government. This is rebellion.[147]

The repudiation of this fundamental proposition goes counter to the facts of the revolt as recorded above. Dr R.C. Majumdar's analysis of the situation in so far as the character of the outbreak is concerned, though very penetrating, is coloured by the views of authors like Syed Ahmed Khan and Raikes. Since the former held that the population of no part of the North-West provinces tried or even thought of rendering any assistance to the native rebellious chiefs,[148] he cannot be regarded as a reliable authority. As for the 'painstaking analysis' of Raikes, that after the fall of Delhi the agricultural proprietors in the Doab welcomed their English masters, that the incentive to disaffection was the prospect of loot and plunder, and that the people longed for the return of the magistrate,[149] we have many, in fact too many, effusions of that sort originating from the same group to which he belonged.[150] The assumption that the country returned to normal conditions after the fall of Delhi is entirely wrong.[151] If it is true that there would have been no civil outbreak without the mutiny, it is equally true that the spirit of revolt as manifested in the mutiny was not terminated by its suppression but was facilitated by the circumstances of civil rebellion which succeeded the mutinies. That being the situation, it is difficult to get 'confirmation and illustration of Raikes's views at every step.'[152] The testimony of Dr Duff whose panicky letters

were not liked by the British public may not be worthy of serious consideration, but the rejection of the opinion of John Bruce Norton that the outbreak was a rebellion of the people, on the ground that the premise of this class of writers (the outbreak was an organized national revolt) was wrong, raises a difficult question.[153] It is perfectly easy to agree with Dr Majumdar that the revolt of 1857 was not the result of a general conspiracy which he had established on firm grounds. But it would be equally difficult to accept that a rebellion without a previous conspiracy cannot be of much consequence. He reinforces his position by debunking the four famous leaders and showing that they were alienated from the British for private reasons. The fading off of the 'natural leaders' need not be regretted but it has not been shown that the civil rebellion of the period originated from the rancour and interest of the four disgruntled persons. The assumption that these leaders alone counted and that the content of the revolt depended upon their aims and interests involves a total denial of the essence of history: that the general mass of people have also their reactions to, and grievances against, a particular system of rule to ventilate, apart from obeying the orders of their superiors. Indeed, the great peculiarity of the civil rebellion of the mutinies was that in general it was neither sponsored nor prompted from above. But for that reason it cannot be regarded as purposeless or erratic. Besides this, the events of 1857 also struck Dr Majumdar as having been of a very limited character being confined to the state of Uttar Pradesh and the fringes of the neighbouring country; and even the whole of U.P., as he says, following perhaps Syed Ahmed Khan, was not the scene of revolt.[154] But a study of the local movements of Bihar,Sagar, and Narbada countries and of east Panjab point to a different situation, as presented in this work, apart from the fact that the North-West provinces during that time extended up to Jabalpur. Dr Majumdar also finds it difficult to regard even the revolt of U.P. and Western Bihar as either national or general.

In any objective consideration of the course of the Indian rebellion it will have to be admitted that the rebellion in Bihar with Shahabad as centre attained an unpredictable proportion. There the people carried on a long intermittent struggle with varying degrees of intensity even after the death of Kunwar Singh. The rebellion was raging down upto the end of 1858 in Sambalpur and also in Chakradharpur on the very borders of Bengal.[155] In Bundelkhand, and in Sagar and Narbada territories, and

also in portions of the southern Maratha country the great bulk of the people rose against British rule and so also in the North-West provinces where the risings of the people and the sepoys were almost simultaneous in point of time, and the alliance between the military and agricultural classes was the closest of its kind.[156] In Rohilkhand, the country of the hardy rohillas, who had not forgotten their hereditary rancour, the movement took the form of a Mahomedan rising and was marked by communal distemper; yet 'the national heart', as Kaye says, 'was turned against the English.'[157] Throughout Rohilkhand disorganization in the civil government preceded the mutiny in the cantonments, and infection of sedition and disaffection spread in the Gangetic tracts which had been in open rebellion.[158]

The affairs in Oudh had assumed special significance during this period of struggle. The Governor-General had always this question uppermost in his mind and urged with his commander that the country should be taken in hand with the least possible delay and British authority re-established in the centre and capital of Oudh, at Lucknow, which had scarcely been in their possession for two years. He could not, from a historical point of view, forget that British relations with Oudh were not above board, and were in every Indian's mind for the last two years. There were also other reasons for giving immediate attention to the affairs of Oudh. The revolt in Oudh, according to all contemporary writers, early assumed the character of a war of independence. As the *Times* of London observed:[159]

> There it is not fanaticism or religious panic which holds the guiding spring, there it is love of freedom—the dislike of foreign rule that actuates the people.

The siege and capture of Lucknow and its defence by the Indians which were attended with indications of a national resistance raised many issues of the rebellion of the sepoy war. Even before the fall of the city, Canning directed the Chief Commissioner at Lucknow that his proclamation was to be issued so soon as the British troops have possession or command of the city, and in no case before its fall. The proclamation dated 14 March, 1858, declared that, except in a few specified cases, the talukdari lands would be liable to forfeiture:

> The Governor-General further proclaims to the people of Oudh, that, with the above mentioned exceptions, the proprietary right in the soil of the province is confiscated to the British Government which will dispose of that right in such manner as to it may seem fitting.[160]

This confiscation clause in the Oudh proclamation was almost universally condemned as being singularly injudicious, and even Lord Ellenborough, then Secretary of State for India, resigned on this account.[161] The secret committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company urged the mitigation of the severity of the decree of confiscation on the ground that the rebels of Oudh were under very different circumstances than their compatriots in other provinces.[162] More emphatic was the protest of the Chief Commissioner of Oudh, Sir James Outram, who pointed out that the effect of the proclamation would be to confiscate the entire proprietary right in the soil since there were not a dozen landholders who had not borne arms. They could not do otherwise, even if they had no grievance to complain of, under the shocks to which the British rule was exposed in Oudh. As they are honourable enemies, they deserved a better treatment, or else, the Commissioner warned, guerilla war will again commence.[163]

The proclamation was so opposed to the usually conciliatory attitude of Canning that his defence of the measure lends interest to the question. In his letter to Outram dated 31 March, he admits that the talukdars of Oudh, who had suffered a loss of property by the introduction of British rule recently established, should be treated differently than the rebels of the old provinces. It was no marvel that this class of people should hasten to shake off their new allegiance when the British rule was found to be dissolving. But he expressed his doubts if the case of the suffering landlords was not over-dramatized. The attempt to introduce into Oudh a system of village settlement in place of the old settlement under talukdars might not have been expedient, but it was certainly the right one, as he thought it, on a question of justice, for the lands and villages from which the talukdars were disinherited were mostly those usurped by them through fraud and violence. In support of his contention that a sense of justice and loss was not always the factor which provoked the hostile activities of some of the most active rebels, the Governor-General proceeded to show that the raja of Churda did not lose a single village by the summary settlement, not to speak of the fact that his assessment was materially reduced, and so also was the case with the raja of Bhinga. The raja of Gonda lost thirty villages out of four hundred and his assessment was also lowered by some ten thousand rupees. The young raja of Nanpara was saved from the dissolution of his estate by the British government, he was recognized as sole proprietor of the estate losing only

six villages out of more than a thousand, yet he was one of the earliest to join the rebel forces. The case of the raja of 'Dhowrera' was similar and so also was the position of Ushraf Bux Khan.[164]

The observation of the Governor-General that injustice at the hands of the new administration has not been the cause of hostility, at least in these recorded instances, can be interpreted to mean that the Oudh chiefs in general appear to have been actuated either by patriotic or selfish motives. Neither of this is again wholly untenable. The talukdars cannot certainly be dissociated from patriotic motives. Gubbins gives many instances of the attempts made by the government to secure the fidelity of the landed chiefs, whose friendship or rivalry were matters of consequence, by promise of high reward and grant of perpetual jagirs, as in the case of raja Nawabali of Mahumdabad, raja Guru Baksh Singh of Ramnagar and raja Man Singh and others but failed to work upon their cupidity.[165]

The war of the mutiny in Oudh took the character of a social war, a legitimate war of independence. Yet it cannot be denied, as Canning analysed:

> the moving spirit of these chiefs of Oudh must be looked for elsewhere mainly in the repugnance which they feel to suffer any restraint of their hitherto arbitrary power...to a diminution of their importance and to the obligations of disbanding their armed followers.[166]

The assumption is that the rebel chiefs appear to have been actuated far less by a feeling of loyalty for their late king and patriotic interests than by motives more selfish. It is known that the whole population of Oudh was inspired by martial instincts and that for centuries the nobles of that country constituted a power superior to that of the King. Before the British conquest, the country had not been held by a strong central power which favoured the growth of fortified places held by feudal chieftains,[167] and indeed, on this, and on many other aspects, nothing could be so opposed to each other as the condition of Oudh and of the Panjab immediately after they were respectively brought under British rule, which accounted for the revolutionary excesses of the former country and the restrained course of the rebellion in the latter during the sepoy war. While therefore the territorial instincts of the zamindars of Oudh played their part in the causation of the rebellion in Oudh, no less potent were the higher motives of independence and freedom from foreign rule

which must have been produced by the shock and tension of the situation. The noble part played, and the sacrifices made, by the chiefs of Oudh for their king, their country, and their religion put out of court any consideration postulating mere personal and selfish motives in the Oudh leaders.[168]

But what constitutes the chief objection to Canning's theory is that numerous talukdars of Oudh who joined the rebellion had actually suffered most and lost their all by the village system so recklessly introduced. It is idle to contend that the reversion of the former talukdari system in favour of a village system had nothing to do with the rebellion in Oudh as Gubbins would have us believe. He failed to realise that in India the village system was not complete without the zamindars and that it was not destroyed by allowing a class of large proprietors to exist; it simply lay behind them. The fact that the superiority and influence of the landed classes had formed a necessary element in the social constitution of India was ignored.[169] This was the tragedy of the civilian settlement as demonstrated in the revolt in Oudh.[170]

In looking at this great history of the sepoy war as a whole, we shall not take a just account of it unless we consider that it was far more than a military and mainly feudal insurrection which it looks like in a first view. The sepoys were no doubt the spearhead of this violent upheaval, but ultimately they fell into the rank of camp followers and swelled the number of feudal levies. The landed chiefs remained in the field almost from the beginning to the end and shaped their activities according to political and economic conditions of their respective localities, but they did not necessarily play a reactionary or conservative part or show any spirit of feudal obscurantism. On the contrary, they became the unconscious tool of a vague feeling of patriotism while combating the anti-feudal tendencies of the British settlement operations.

This is disputed by Dr R. C. Majumdar. He observes:

> The miseries and bloodshed of 1857–8 were not the birth-pang of a freedom movement in India, but the dying groans of an obsolete autocracy....[171]

He argues his case by stating that if the talukdars of Oudh are to be looked upon as fighters for independence of India,

> can we withhold such claim or recognition from Wazir Ali of Awadh, Pyche Raja of Malabar, Dhundia Wagh of Mysore.... Vizieram Rauze of Vizianagram.... Vellu Thampi of Travancore, Jagabandhu of Khurda....'[172]

The whole subject was for the first time discussed in all its bearings in my book, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India* (1765–1857) to which the attention of the readers may now be drawn. Details recorded in that book of the activities of the above leaders will certainly show that they were fighting for their territorial interests in defiance of British authority. Wherever such activities called forth the support of large bodies of common people, as distinct from personal retainers or mercenaries, wherever some initiative in the struggle passed to the inhabitants of the affected area, the historian cannot in fairness deny the existence of a resistance movement, not very far removed from a national movement of some kind. But the whole question is not free from difficulties. A critical perusal of the above book will show that in the pre-mutiny period outburst of violent types broke out mainly in Bengal, Orissa, Madras, Travanore, Mysore, and Malabar—roughly speaking the region where the mutiny call of 1857 hardly had any response. The leaders referred to in the above list excepting Wazirali came from this belt of country which was the oldest possessions of the English in India. But in the countries which were later on acquired at different stages, that is to say, the whole extent of the sub-continent extending from the Panjab to Bihar, and from Dehra Dun to Kolhapur, no formidable anti-British movement originated (excepting those at Bareilly and Benares) in the early period though it was particularly the area where the drama of the revolt of 1857 was enacted. This aspect of the question very forcibly illustrates a line of demarcation which cannot be easily rationalized. Nevertheless, a tentative proposition may be offered in that in 1857 there was the greatest dislike of British authority where it had not yet been long established; and conversely, there was the least effort towards change in those parts of India which had longest been subject to British rule.[173] This explanation does not really cover all the factors which made for the presence, in the new countries and the absence in the old, of the revolt and unrest of 1857. Yet in a way it points to a state of acclimatization and adjustment coupled with the experience of frequent previous suppression that had broken the spirit of many men which prevented the people of the old areas from renewing their offensive in the year 1857.[174] The many sources of discontent and affliction, which were breaking forth in an almost uninterrupted chain of violent current in this area in the pre-mutiny period, did not widen and merge with similar trends of the new areas in 1857. This provided the occasion for the emergence of the northern and the central regions of India into a position of relative

importance. Besides, the talukdars of this period were fighting in the background of the imperial traditions of the Moghuls and Marathas which raised the civil movements of 1857 much above the level of previous more isolated risings. The outbreak may not be regarded as an all-India war of independence, but even if it was not so, Beni Madho, Narpat Singh, Kunwar Singh, and Daulat Singh were not far removed in character and outlook from the period of the movement of independence which began later. Tutu Mia, Jagabandhu, and Velu Tampi were lone figures of an earlier age. In the pre-mutiny period there had not been much combination between the different disaffected elements of the country, the military, aristocracy, priesthood, and commonalty. The sepoy mutinies and the civil commotions had run on two parallel lines. It was the revolt of 1857 which brought about a link-up of all these elements,[175] on a massive scale with a formidable challenge to the alien rule. As such, the 1857 upsurge was undoubtedly national unless we restrict the term unduly.

There is no doubt that the strong under-current of popular disaffection which was frequently manifesting itself in open resistance against the British in the early period culminated in the sepoy war of 1857.[176] A few instances of the civil commotion of the mutiny period were really the continuation of earlier outbreaks[177] and some of the leaders of the pre-mutiny period such as Delan Sha, the gond chief of Narsinghpur,[178] Apa Sahib of Nagpur,[179] and Chakra Bisayi, the leader of the khonds[180] are also referred to in the official communications of the mutiny period as entertaining hostile designs. The disturbances of the earlier period pointed to a settled disaffection of the people and clearly anticipated their participation in the rebellion of the mutinies. Yet it cannot be denied that the background and the unique situation created by the 1857 mutinies released forces which immensely strengthened the popular uprisings of the sepoy war. The combination and scale of operations stretched out to wide fields and all the elements of discontent and disaffection being focussed in a limited period of two years and not diffused over a century as in the early period gave a new force and direction to the spirit of opposition to British rule in 1857. Viewed in this light the revolt of that year appears to have been the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge a foreign power. This is a real, if remote, approach to the freedom movement of India of a later age.

The aristocracy of India was neither dying nor had it yet become obsolete. Though fighting for their lands and rights, the local landed chiefs still could function on a national plane since they brought together

an alliance of the diverse people of all classes who made common cause with them in complete disregard of the forces of estrangement which might otherwise exist in the social and economic life. This combination of the local landed chiefs all over the country who were bound by a community of interests, added with the grouping of their followers at cross sections, created possibilities for the foundation of a national front and in consequence united a big portion of India against foreign domination as never before. Thus old feudal instincts and the anti-alien patriotism became mixed up in 1857 in a curious process. The latter was not yet of the pure advanced political type, as the leaven of feudal discontent was still strong. Yet the yearning for freedom which was latent in these instincts stood out as the outward emblem of a national outburst against foreign rule which was rendered intensive by reason of a socio-religious and economic discontent. Here, surely, we have objectively an anticipation of the future and not a mere recoil to the past.

Apparently enough the upsurge appears to have been erratic, isolated from large regions, and even sporadic. It was also characterized by lack of efficient organization on a big scale. But it is no less obvious that the revolt also presents evidence of consistency in so far as the spontaneity of the far-flung movement is concerned. The sepoys starting the conflagration, the British authority superseded, the local leaders setting up independent governments, the landed chiefs re-occupying their estates, and the common people rising in the interior—and all these taking place in utmost regularity, as though in response to a mysterious clarion call, bespeak at least in a vague and inchoate form, the elements of a national resistance movement against an alien imperial domination.

The want of a concerted plan which was discernible in the rebellious proceedings was inevitable as the rebels though conscious of their object had no precise idea as to the ways and means to be adopted for the destruction of the British power. They took a leap in the dark, people who could not be dreamt of joining the revolt even at the instigation of Mephistopheles were on their feet without thinking of consequences. The movement failed for various reasons, political immaturity, defective military command,[181] and indifferent leadership.[182] The excesses committed by the sepoys had also to a great extent alienated the sympathies of the people in many places.[183] Yet it cannot be denied that it was not a movement of the disgruntled elements alone but a rising of the people, at any rate a considerable section of them, who felt, however dimly, the

stirring of a common impulse. The character and content of the upsurge that put its stamp on the year 1857 point to a conflict that was larger in significance than that of a mutiny in the barracks. The legacy of a revolution is often laid up in the subconscious mind of the race. It is difficult to trace the causes that work noiselessly to a certain end that is hardly in sight. Who knows that the inception of the nationalist movement was not contained in the rising of 1857 after the fashion of the oak in the acorn? Because the revolt of 1857 was not merely anti-British but a movement expressing profound desires for freedom.

NOTES

1. Mowbray Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, (1859) p. 43; R.C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, (1957) p. 207.

2. *Further Papers Relative to the Mutinies in the East Indies presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty* (henceforth FP), ix, pp. 171–2: Case of Thakur Biswanath Sai. Cf. the Statement of Nihsan Singh that the sepoys demanded the presence of Kunwar Singh (K. K. Datta, in *Patna University Journal*, viii, 1954). Also the case of Nana Sahib.

3. The terms are: the people are God's, the country Padshah's, and the order or government.... This proclamation was made in Cawnpore (G.W. Forrest, *Selections from the Letters Despatches and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-8*, ii, App. p. xii), Bijnour (*Narrative of Events Attending the Outbreak of Disturbances*, Published by the Government of India, henceforth NE. i, p. 511), Moradabad (NE. ii, p. 18) Banda (NE. i, p. 526), Jhansi (NE. i, p. 555), Singhbhum (NE. ii, pp. 182–3), and in many other places.

4. F. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab*,(1858), p. 139. Thornhill of Mathura was able to observe that the people in general did not regret the end of British rule. They liked the freedom they were then enjoying and the excitement of the time. Life was now for them full of anticipations (M. Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 114–16).

5. Cf. the statement of Henry Lawrence: 'Those who are loudest in our praise cannot forgive our victory' (J.W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, 1880, i, p. 14).

6. *The Englishman*, 17 November, 1857.

7. For the proclamations of Bahadur Shah, see *Trial*, pp. 71, 148f. 116, 176-7. Sir William Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India during the Mutiny of 1857*, ed. by William Coldstream, i, p. 529; ii, pp. 4, 6, 175, 194; R.C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, (1957) pp. 228, 243.

8. Cf. the proclamation issued by Prince Mirza Mohammed Firuz Shah dated February, 1858: 'Since the real purpose of this war is to save religion....' Dodd,

The History of the Indian Revolt, p. 411. Nana's proclamation breathes the same religious animosity such, as Mowbray Thomson says, influenced the course of the rebellion (*Cawnpore*, pp. 143–7). W.J. Shepherd says that Nana's proclamation was widely circulated (*The Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore*, 1879, p. 50f). For the Bareilly proclamation of Khan Bahadur Khan, see Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War* iii.

9. Montalembert, *A Debate on India in the English Parliament* (This appeared on October, 1858, in the *Correspondent*, a monthly organ of the Liberal Catholic Party in France), p. 19n. Sherring estimated that the total losses sustained by the African Presbyterian Missions in the North-West provinces was Rs 237, 416 (Rev. M.A. Sherring, *The Indian Church During the Great Rebellion*, 1859, p. 226). The Mahomedans in particular showed a great zeal in converting the Christians (Ibid., pp. 85, 183f, 193, 208, 301f). For the destruction of Church property in Delhi, Nagpur, Ludhiana, Gorakhpur, (Ibid., pp. 70, 307, 313, 320). For the desecration of the church property in Indore and Jhansi, see J.H. Sylvester, *Recollections of the Campaign in Malwa and Central India*, (1860), pp. 50–1, 86; and for Fatehgarh, Bouchier, *Eight Months' Campaign*, p. 183, and Cosens and Wallace, *Fatehgarh and the Mutiny*, (1933), p. 65. Commonwealth Relations Office, Whitehall, London: Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, (henceforth CRO), *Secret Letters from India*, Vol. 163, p. 434.

10. CRO, *Secret Letters*, Vol. 163, p. 434.

11. G. Dodd, *The History of the Indian Revolt* (known as Chambers's History, (1859) p. 427.

12. H.D. Roberston, *District Duties during the Revolt*, (1859) p. 190; Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures*, p. 333.

13. J.W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, ii, pp. 368–9n.

14. FP. viii, p. 52; H.D. Robertson, *District Duties during the Revolt*, (1859) p. 21.

15. NE. i, pp. 4–6, 93. See also the letter of Dr Russell, headed 'Sahib and Nigger' to the *Times*, London, in which he ascribes the resulting popular commotion to the indignities with which the Indians were habitually treated by the Englishmen.

16. NE. i, pp. 134–5, 156: Report by C. R. Lindsay, officiating magistrate.

17. N.A. Chick, *The Annals of the Indian Rebellion*, (1860) p. 159: Narrative of occurrences by Chunilal, the newswriter; Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, ii, pp. 99–100.

18. See Wilberforce's description of how the Panjab mutineers met death with equanimity (R.C. Wilberforce, *An Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 42–3). Also Mrs Coopland quoted in Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 172–3. For the fighting qualities of the sepoys and individual acts of heroism see J. Holloway *Essays on the Indian Mutiny*, (1864) pp. 165, 213, 225, 262, 273, 291–3, 330.If the fear of the bayonet's point proved a deterrent no less effective was

the sharp edge of the Indian sword. The English had the advantage of superior arms. Dr Sen observes that the enfield helped to overthrow the mutineers (S.N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, 1957, p. 207).

19. FP. v, App. A. p. 90. In Lucknow, Sir James Outram did all he could to obtain the release of the European prisoners and offered Rs 1,00,001 for each of their lives, but Rees says that the insurgents wanted terms and not money (Rees, *A Personal Narrative*, p. 268).

20. Hope Grant and H. Knollys, *Incidents of the Sepoy War (1857-8)*, (1873) p. 281; R.M. Martin, *The Indian Empire*, ii, 487; J.T. Nash, *Volunteering in India*, (1893), p. 122. Letter of Marx dated London, 1857, published in *New York Herald Tribune* and quoted in *India Today*, Vol. ii, September, 1952.

21. Cooper, *The Crisis*, pp. 23–4, 117; Chick, *op. cit.*, 255–6; FP. v, App. A. p. 89 Ibid., App. B., pp. 34, 464, 469, 490; Maude and Sherer, *Memories of the Mutiny*, (1894) ii, p. 430. Wilberforce records an instance of effective spying by the Indians. The British council of war had settled the final plan of assaulting the Kashmiri gate on 13 September. When it was taken next morning the exact details of the assaulting columns, the plans, and points of attack as deliberated secretly by the British were found in the order book of the rebel army (Wilberforce, *An Unrecorded Chapter*, pp. 146–7). Also see Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

22. Cooper, *The Crisis*, pp. 24–5.

23. Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Vol. xi, 1857–58, pp 4–6.

24. NE. i, p. 269; Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, ii, p. 403.

25. *Memories of the Mutiny*, i, p. 70; ii, p. 526 re: Neill's order regarding the blood; Col. A.R.D. Mackenzie, *Mutiny Memoirs*, (1892) p. 71.

26. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, ii, pp. 236, 402–3, 604–6, 605n. A French Catholic who believed in the legitimate and necessary ascendancy of the Christian West over the Indian peninsula admitted that the just measure of suppression has been overstepped and that the executions of the conquered sepoy *en masse* will imprint an indelible stain upon the history of the English Empire in India (Montalembert, *A debate*, p. 21). See also K.M. Bartum, *A Widow's Reminiscences of the Seige of Lucknow*, p. 86; Lt. V.D. Majendie, *Up among the Pandies*, (1859) pp. 224–6; T.R. Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 220.

27. FP. ix, pp. 886–8.

28. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, ii, p. 264.

29. FP. v, p. 60: Narrative of Events to 12 September.

30. FP. vii, p. 275: Magistrate of Jaunpur 9 October. Also FP. vii, p. 22, and *The Hindu Patriot*, 8 July, 1858, for other excesses committed. See R.M. Martin, *The Indian Empire (1858-61)* ii, p. 288, for the most graphic account of the experience of a Highlander regarding the scene of destruction. With the exception of Mowbray Thomson's *Caunpore*, there is nothing more touching in the whole range of mutiny

literature. Also Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*. The latest treatment of the subject from Dr R. C. Majumdar (*op. cit.*, pp. 93–113) is both illuminating and instructive.

31. FP. ix, p. 381.

32. FP. ix, pp. 403–4: Narrative of Events to 20 March.

33. 8 October, 1857.

34. Quoted in *The Englishman*, 6 October, 1857; 9 November, 1857.

35. Parliamentary debates, quoted in *The Englishman*, 17 November, 1857.

36. Kaye, ii, p. 406n.

37. *Diary*, i, p. 214. Canning refused to publish some papers illustrating the brutality of some of the special tribunals. When pressed to publish them, he is said to have said 'No, I had rather submit to any obloquy than publish to the world that would so terribly disgrace my countrymen' (R. C. Dutt, quoted in *India Struggles for Freedom* (1945) by H.N. Mukherjee). For a list of persons condemned by court-martial and special commissioners see Muir, *Record of the Intelligence Department*, i, p. 335.

38. *Hindu Patirot*, 29 April, 1858.

39. Even the *Times* suggested that the English generals should execute military justice soberly and temperately (Quoted in *The Englishman*, 11 December, 1857).

40. FP. v, App. B. pp. 309–11: C. Beadon, Secretary to the Government of India.

41. Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Vol. xi, 1857–8, pp. 11–14. A recent writer on the subject, R. Hilton, however, maintains that in actual fact. Canning erred on the side of severity (Richard Hilton, *The Indian Mutiny*, 1957, pp. 208–9).

42. FP. ix, p. 931: W. Muir, secretary, Allahabad, 10 April, 1858.

43. The *Hindu Patriot* says for offering armed resistance, 20 May, 1858.

44. NE. i, p. 94.

45. Narrative of events by G. F. Harvey, commissioner, p. 23.

46. The *Hindu Patriot* of 17 June, 1858, quotes Russell's report on the subject and also refers to the speech of Mr Buxton in the Parliament, who censured the government for hanging to death the raja of Ballabhgarh.

47. FP. ix, p. 930.

48. Cf. the serious importance Nicholson attached to the situation (Wilberforce, *An Unrecorded Chapter*, p. 33).

49. FP. v, App. B. 64: W. Tayler, commissioner of Circuit, 11 July, 1857.

50. Ibid., p. 286.

51. FP. ix, p. 81: R. J. H. Birch, Fort William, 22 December.

52. FP. ix, p. 903.

53. *The Englishman*, 14 December, 1857.

54. FP. ix, p. 239: C. Chester, commissioner of Allahabad, 7 November.

55. *Supra*, p. 28n2.

56. Narrative of Events by G.F. Harvey, commissioner, Agra Division, p. 43 (App.).

57. FP, vii, pp. 267–9: Return of collection in the Azamgarh District.

58. FP. ix, pp. 215–6: Narrative of events to 14 November.

59. M. Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies of Oudh*, (1859) p. 186; Forrest, *Selections*, iii, App. B. p. ix: Letter of G. Coupers. See also Capt. R.P. Anderson, *A Personal Journal of the Seige of Lucknow*, (1858) p. 11.

60. L.E.R. Rees, *A Personal Narrative of the Seige of Lucknow*, (1858) p. 29. Similar effects were felt in a far distant hill station of the Panjab (Cooper, *The Crisis*, p. 116).

61. Gubbins, *op. cit.*, pp. 191–2.

62. Karl Marx, *op. cit.*, *India Today*, Vol. ii, September, 1952.

63. FP. v, App. A. p. 92.

64. FP. v, p. 98.

65. FP. vii, p. 67: M. H. Court, collector, Allahabad, 19 September.

66. FP. ix, pp. 291–2: Report by M. H. Court, 17 September.

67. FP. v, App. B. p. 448.

68. FP. ix, p. 245: See also the report from Bhagalpur, FP. vii, p. 26.

69. FP. ix, p. 228.

70. FP. vii, p. 14.

71. *The Englishman*, pp. 4, 10, 11 December, 1857.

72. FP, ix, p. 385.

73. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

74. G.B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-8*, i, p. 191.

75. NE. i, p. 136.

76. NE. i, pp. 140, 144.

77. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, ii, pp. 234, 412.

78. FP. iv, p. 105: Officer Commanding Allahabad, 19 August: *supra*, pp. 30–1, 33.

79. FP. vii, p. 34: The Governor-General of India to the Court of Directors, Fort William, 18 October.

80. Ibid. p. 261.

81. Ibid. pp. 262–3: Gopiganj, 3 October.

82. Forrest, *Selections*, iii, App. B. p. x. Notwithstanding this restiveness to seize lands it was to be doubted whether the rebellion had not diminished the value of landed property in its ultimate consequence, as the capitalists were likely to hang back from investment in land from a feeling of insecurity of tenure. (See Report by R. Spankie, of Saharanpur in NE. i, pp. 226, 490).

83. Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures*, p. 334.

84. J.M. Ludlow, *A Pamphlet on the War in Oudh*, p. 50.

85. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, iii, p. 286.
86. Ibid., pp. 250–1.
87. Robertson, *District Duties*, p. 158.
88. NE. i, p. 93.
89. FP. v, App. A. p. 66: H. C. Wake, Arrah, 11 July, 1857.
90. Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.*, i, p. 130.
91. FP. v, App. B. p. 427, vii, p. 4.
92. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, ii, p. 260.
93. FP. vi, pp. 87, 89: The Officer Commanding at Benares, 11 October.
94. Maude and Sherer, *op.cit.*, i, p. 170.
95. *Supra*, p. 230.
96. Cf. the remarks of F. Williams, the commissioner of the Meerut Division who was commissioned to institute an enqurity into the origin and character of the revolt: 'Those who have lived in the midst of it, and who should be the best judges, cannot but feel that the theory that it was a purely military revolt, and the other that it was a national effort to shake off tyrants, are equally far from the truth (NE. i, p. 288).
97. FP. iv, p. 137.
98. FP. vii, p. 75; Report by P. Carnegy (Mehndi Hasan had 10,000 men consisting of new levies and villagers).
99. NE. i, p. 5.
100. NE. i, pp. 295–6.
101. NE. i, p. 94.
102. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, ii, p. 234.
103. Ibid., p. 256.
104. At some places plunderings were so extensive that they could hardly be regarded as work of men. Cf. Robert's letter to his wife Katherine (*A Widow's Reminiscences*, p. 77).
105. Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures*, p. 87.
106. FP. iv, p. 105; vi, p. 200.
107. FP. vi, p. 197.
108. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, ii, p. 257n.
109. NE. i, p. 231f.
110. Robertson, *District Duties*, p. 134; Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, iii, p. 250; Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures*, p. 106.
111. *Supra*, pp. 173–4.
112. FP. ix, p. 242: Commissioner of Benares, 19 October, 1857.
113. NE. i, p. 548; Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department*, ii, pp. 2, 5–7, 92.
114. There were also quite a few instances of the fidelity of the sepoys and their contradictory impulses which weakened the strength of the mutinous

regiments in some areas (Kaye, ii, p. 500). Also Mowbray Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore,* p. 41.

115. FP, ix, p. 598.

116. CRO. *Secret Letters from India,* Vol. 164, p. 339 (No. 81A of 1858).

117. For the communal question of this period, see Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department,* i, pp. 378, 439, 443, 473, 507, 510; ii, pp. 4, 22, 23, 25, 26, 42, 134, 179; Kaye, iii, p. 288f; Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 227f; *supra,* pp. 89, 109, 112, 115–17, 157.

118. The *Englishman,* 16 September, 1857. The well-known fact that Azimullah Khan and Sobharam were the advisers of Nana Sahib and Khan Bahadur Khan respectively highlights this assumption.

119. An excerpt from a letter issued by maulavi Kootah Shah in respect of joint alliances of the Hindus and Mahomedans ran as follows: 'I conjure the Hindus in the name of Ganga, Tulsi and Salikram and the Muhamedans by the name of God and the *Koran* to join us in destroying the English, for their mutual welfare. The killing of cows being esteemed one of the greatest sins amongst the Hindus, the Muhamedan chiefs have agreed to abolish that custom from the day the Hindus come forwared to kill the Europeans...let not this opportunity pass away' (FP. ix, pp. 851–2). Excepting for the purpose of uniting the Hindus and Mahomedans the different manifestos of the period put forward by the rebel leaders are characterized by the entire absence of any competent analysis of the evil effects of the British rule which caused this mutiny and rebellion. The proclamation issued by Nana Sahib on 6 July, 1857, quoted in Kaye, and in Majumdar (*op. cit.*, p. 133) is a type of mendacious propaganda that was carried on. The proclamation issued by the royal begam of Lucknow was of a different sort.

120. *Supra,* p. 69. Also the evidence of Mrs Aldwell, in the *Trial of Bahadur Shah,* p. 99.

121. Forrest, *Selections,* ii, p. 377ff. (Intro.)

122. FP. iv, p. 140: Fort Agra, 22 July, 1857.

123. FP. v, App. B. p. 8: Patna, 15 July.

124. FP. ix, p. 852.

125. Forrest, *Selections,* ii, p. 150 (Intro.)

126. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

127. Disraeli in the House of Commons (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, July, Vol. cxlvii, p. 444).

128. Robertson, *District Duties,* p. 61: Holloway, *Essays,* pp. 260–1.

129. W. Forbes-Mitchell, *Reminiscences of the Great Mutiny,* pp. 99–100.

130. Maude and Sherer, *Memories of the Mutiny,* i, p. 160.

131. Medley, *A Year's Complaining in India,* p. 195.

132. Muir *Records of the Intelligence Department,* i, pp. 31, 35, 202–3, 248,

289, 334–5, 337, 343, 360, 405, 491, 505; ii, pp. 112, 145, 153, 155, 202, 237, 266, 335–6, 363, 372.

133. Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department*, i, p. 46.

134. *Supra*, pp. 81–2.

135. Muir, *Records*, i, p. 191.

136. NE. i, p. 288.

137. *Native Fidelity during the Mutiny: The Mutinites and the People* (1859) by a Hindu which attempts to vindicate the Indians from the charge of universal disloyalty. The author is Sambhu Charan Mukhapadhyya. This is not to be confused with another work entitled *The Mutinies, the Government and the People by a Hindu* which is usually ascribed to Kishori Chandra Mitra.

138. R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 223, 225–6.

139. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War* ii, p. 603f.

140. Cf. the remarks of Dr S. N. Sen that no community, class, or caste as such was entirely for or against the government (*op. cit.*, p. 406).

141. This point has been developed by Dr S. N. Sen (*op. cit.*, p. 411).

142. Robertson, *District Duties*, etc. p. 108.

143. *Op. cit.*, p. 180.

144. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 560.

145. See Appendix D: The behaviour of the Talukdars of Oudh during the Mutiny.

146. Dr R. C. Majumdar in his recent work seems to have given an overemphasis to the depredations of the anti-social elements (*op. cit.*, pp. 51, 220–2, 224, 268). Dr Sen (*op. cit.*, pp. 406–7) also makes a derisive reference to the gujar King Fatua of Saharanpur. But if three thousand people of this and other allied communities could assemble together for hostile purposes the movement cannot be dismissed as a mere instance of predatory activity (*supra*, p. 77), Poor Devi Singh of Mathura has been too much ridiculed by Thornhill who was otherwise very sober in his observation. The fact is that when the striking power of the government was reduced it gave inducement to royal pretensions. Devi Singh, as Thornhill himself states, took his new position very seriously and organized a government of his own. Then what about the gujar leader of Dholpur who mustered an army of nearly three thousand men (*supra*, p. 83)? Further, Shahamal, the Jat leader, was not one with less energy and resolution than the leaders of the other classes (*supra*, pp. 64–5). It does not appear quite reasonable that 1857 should be dismissed as a string of depredations of the gujars and ranghars.

147. Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures*, p. 330f.

148. Quoted in Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

149. Quoted in Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

150. Cf. the views of Muir quoted above. Dr Sen also argues like Muir and

Raikes but he admits that their evidences cannot be regarded as conclusive (*op. cit.*, p. 410).

151. *Supra*, pp. 35, 38–9, 41–3, 49.

152. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

153. Ibid., p. 214ff.

154. Dr Sen finds that the principal theatre of war extended roughly from Bihar to Rajputana (*op. cit.*, p. 407).

155. The Bihar movement has been played down in many works on the ground that the rising in Chotanagpur was of a very limited character, that the Shahabad revolt was a personal matter of Kunwar and also because the province as a whole remained loyal (cf. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 408–9).

156. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, iii, p. 194.

157. Ibid., p. 251. The '1857' is of the view that the masses of Rohilkhand in general were not behind the revolt (Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 409).

158. W. Edwards, *Personal Adventures during the Indian Rebellion*, (1858) p. 3.

159. 31 March, 1858.

160. Forrest, *Selections*, iii, pp. 503–4.

161. For the general emotion which was excited in London on this measure, see Montalembert, *A Debate on India*, p. 27ff.

162. House of Lords, Sessional papers, Vol. xi (Returns etc.), p. 6.

163. House of Lords, Sessional papers, *op. cit.*, (Fresh Returns), p. 1.

164. Ibid. See also McLeod Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny*, p. 291f.

165. Gubbins, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

166. House of Lords, Sessional papers, *op. cit.*

167. Lord Stanley in his Despatch to the Governor-General stated that in September 1856, the number of fortified places held by the great landholders and other influential persons in Oudh amounted to 623, of which 351 were in good repair. (Quoted in Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny*, App. x, para 23, p. 324). See also Montalembert, *op. cit.*, p. 39. Stanley further say that they had large bodies of armed retainers and retained in concealment their serviceable guns despite the proclamation for the surrender of military stores on pain of legal consequence.

168. Cf. the case of Beni Madho and Mohammed Hasan.

169. Townsend, *The Annals of Indian Administration*, Vol. iv, p. 58.

170. Referring to the battle of Chanda (30 October, 1857) which was stoutly contested, H. C. Tucker quoted the remark of a thakur and commented 'I mention it in the present connection to show that if the supreme government does not take steps to preserve the two co-existing rights of talukdar as well as of petty zamindar, we may fully expect to have to fight every foot of our way in Oude (FP. ix, p. 709).

171. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

172. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

173. *Civil Disturbances*, p. 199. The case of the Panjab, and Bihar forms an exception. The newly acquired province of the Panjab was secured by good administration and the old province of Bihar was lost for some time owing to the influence of a galaxy of popular leaders like Kunwar, Nilambar, Arjun, and Surendra.

174. The case of Dayram of Aligarh as foreshadowing the revolt of the talukdars is an exception. But his son was the most active loyalist in the mutiny period (*supra*, p. 80).

175. *Civil Disturbances*, p. 219.

176. *Civil Disturbances*, p. 198.

177. Cf. Surendra Sai (*supra*, p. 196f. *Civil Disturbances*, p. 152n), the outbreak at Savantvad (*Civil Disturbances*, p. 170); the Gadkari rising and the Kolhapur revolt (Ibid., pp. 166–7 and *supra*, p. 230) Santal insurrection.

178. Ibid., p. 178, and *supra*, p. 227.

179. Ibid., p. 117–8, and *supra*, pp. 57, 89.

180. Ibid., p. 111, and *supra*, p. 202.

181. Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department*, i, pp. 41, 61. 106; Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 272; Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 73, 132–3.

182. Dr R. C. Majumdar's chapter on the Sepoys though based only on the accounts of the Delhi Chronicles and a victimised Bengali is a welcome addition to mutiny studies (pp. 172f).

183. For the causes of the failure of the movement see Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, pp. 270–9.

1857: A Review*

S. N. Sen

We have seen how the movement of 1857 originated, gained in momentum, and ran its course. Was it a spontaneous outburst of sepoy discontent or a premeditated revolt engineered by clever politicians? Was it a mutiny limited to the army or did it command the support of the people at large? Was it a religious war against Christians or a racial struggle for supremacy between the black and the white? Were moral issues involved in this mutiny and did the combatants unconsciously fight for their respective civilization and culture? These are some of the questions that must be answered fairly and squarely.

The story of the chapatis lends some colour to the theory of prior preparation, propagation, and conspiracy. In January 1857 small wheaten cakes were circulated from village to village in many districts of northern India. A sinister meanings was later read into it but it is doubtful whether the mysterious cake bore any evil portent. District officers were naturally interested and made some enquiries. Thornhill of Mathura writes that 'The occurrence was so singular that it attracted the attention of the Government, who directed inquiries; but notwithstanding all the efforts that were made, it could not be ascertained either by whom the distribution had been contrived, where it commenced, or what it signified. After being a nine days' wonder the matter ceased to be talked about, and was presently for the time forgotten, except by those few who remembered that a similar distribution of cakes had been made in Madras towards the end of the last century, and had been followed by the mutiny of Vellore.'[1] The village chaukidars, the agency employed for the circulation of chapatis, probably knew nothing about Vellore, and the rural folk,

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whom they served, were not likely to be better informed. Wallace Dunlop of Meerut says that the chaukidars were under the impression that the cakes were distributed by order of the Government. 'The transmission of such little cakes from one district to another is supposed by the Hindoos to effect the removal of epidemic disease'. In his district the chapatis made their appearance at the end of February and beginning of March. He observes that 'The excitement at the time among the Sepoys, and the occurrence afterwards of the mutiny, has led many to connect this cake distribution with our disturbances, but without any sufficient grounds for so doing. It is probable that if any connection existed it was accidental, and the relationship acknowledged by either designing or ignorant persons was consequent upon the distribution, and did not cause or precede it.' In his opinion the chapati was no 'fiery cross' signal. 'Its real origin was,' he concludes, 'doubtless, a superstitious attempt to prevent any return of the fearful visitation of epidemic cholera which devastated the North-West Provinces the year before, and still lingered in scattered spots.'[2] Sir Theophilus Metcalfe of Delhi also testified that the chapatis were supposed to have something to do with sickness and the men who brought them were under the impression that the circulation was by Government orders.[3] Jat Mal, a witness at Bahadur Shah's trial, said that the chapatis had different meanings for different people. Some said, 'it was a propitiatory observance to avert some impending calamity.' Others saw in it an official direction to eat the same food as the Christians. The chapatis were indiscriminately distributed among Hindus and Musalmans alike.[4] Hakim Ahsanullah deposed that nobody could tell what was the object of the distribution of chapatis. All the people in the palace wondered what it could mean.[5] Edwards of Budaun was definite that rural population of all classes, among whom the cakes spread, were ignorant of the real object.[6] An anonymous native of northern India affirmed that the chapatis 'were mere "chalawas" to stop the progress of some disease,...and never a political move'.[7] Sir Syed Ahmed points out that cholera was prevalent at the time of the circulation of chapatis which was according to some people a talisman to ward off the disease. 'The fact is that even at the present day we do not know what caused the distribution of those chuppaties.'[8] A conspiracy is not conducted through such an unintelligible and uncertain medium of communication when it did not demand much ingenuity to find a more effective device. The Government would not have failed to discover some evidence if chapatis had a political motive behind them.

Chapatis appeared in Madhya Pradesh as well. But there also their circulation was not suspected to be susceptible of any political interpretation. Captain Keating of Nimar wrote to Sir Robert Hamilton, 'The year 1857 opened in Nimar by a general distribution of some small cakes which were passed on from village to village. The same, I am aware, occurred all over India and has been spoken of as having been a signal for the disturbances which took place late in the year. At the time they appeared in Nimar they were everywhere brought from the direction of Indore. That city was at that time subjected to a severe visitation of cholera and numbers of inhabitants died daily. It was at that time understood by the people in Nimar, and is still believed, that the cakes of wheat were despatched from Indore after the performance over them of incantations that would insure the pestilence accompanying them'. So in Madhya Pradesh the chapatis were regarded as carriers of pestilence and not as harbingers of political troubles.

In 1858, of course, everything out of the ordinary was treated with suspicion. In September of that year small balls of atta filled with gur and thuli were circulated in Berar. They were suspected to have come from Bombay. How they were distributed is not known but one officer attributed them to Nana and his agents.[9] A pair of ochre-coloured flags with a cocoanut, a betelnut, and a green betel leaf were going from village to village in Chhindwara district in the month of October 1858. This was also supposed to have been done in Nana's interest with some semblance of reason, for Shivaji's banner was ochre-coloured. But it might have been adopted by any religious organization as well. In any case the atta balls and ochre-coloured flag followed and did not precede the Mutiny.

A novel interpretation of the chapati came from Sitaram Baba, a Hindu anchorite, examined by H. B. Devereux, Judicial Commissioner of Mysore, and Captain J. L. Pearse. Sitaram was interrogated for days together (18th January to 25th January 1858) at Mysore. He gave a fantastic story of a conspiracy started by Baiza Bai of Gwalior, twenty years earlier, in which all the principal princes were involved. Baiza Bai dissociated herself from the intrigue when her objective of securing the state for Jayaji Rao was achieved. When Baiza Bai withdrew Nana stepped into her shoes. He relied on the magical power of a necromancer called Dassa Baba and was financed by Raja Golab Singh of Jammu and Seth Lachhmichand of Mathura. The minister of Hyderabad, whose name ended with Chand or Jang, was also in the conspiracy. Dassa Baba had

caused a small idol of lotus seeds to be made and then divided it into small fragments. Each fragment was placed in a chapati and as far as the chapatis went Nana's influence was expected to prevail. A simultaneous night attack at all the stations of India was said to have been planned. All the Englishmen were to be put to death but the women and children were not to be harmed. The Raja of Rewa was to occupy Benares and then invade Bengal. According to Sitaram Baba, Dassa Baba, the prime mover in this countrywide conspiracy, was in the Punjab, but one of his disciples, Din Dayal, was to come south in the guise of a Bairagi. The Maharaja of Mysore was accused of being privy to the intrigue and so were many princes of the south. Forjett dismissed this story as a surmise.[10] The Governor-General thought that Sitaram Baba's allegations should be enquired into though the statement was full of lies and inaccuracies. Copies were, accordingly, sent to the Governor-General's Agents, central India and Hyderabad, and the Governments of Bombay and the Punjab for enquiry, but it does not appear to have been seriously treated anywhere.[11] Sitaram Baba's cock-and-bull story, therefore, does not prove the existence of a pre-concerted conspiracy for an India-wide revolt.

Next comes an alleged letter of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, recently brought to light at Puri. This purports to have been addressed to her family priest at that holy place of pilgrimage. The letter is in Hindi and is dated March 1856. If this document was genuine then the Rani must have been engaged in organising a revolt full one year before the Meerut rising. But the language and script seem to be modern. In her Kharita to Sir Robert Hamilton the Muslim style of dating is followed but this letter, addressed to a Brahman, is dated in the English style. The Rani, contrary to the Indian practice of those times, addressed her priest as 'Respected Pandaji' (Mananiya Pandaji) and subscribes herself as 'Yours Lakshmi Bai' (apka Lakshmi Bai, which again is incorrect Hindi). The seal is different from that used in authentic letters, and lastly it refers to greased cartridge. The cartridge did not come to India before November 1856 and the sepoys do not seem to have heard of it until the following January. The letter was apparently written from Meerut but there is no evidence that the Rani had been to that place in March 1856 or at any other time. The document is obviously a clumsy fabrication and the writer, whoever he or she may be, is accustomed to correspond in English.

Cracroft Wilson was convinced that a date and time had been fixed for a simultaneous rising at all the military stations of India but adduced

no evidence in support of his conclusion. The known facts, however, contradict his thesis. The rising at Meerut, we have seen, was not premeditated. At Lucknow one regiment refused to bite the cartridge early in May, the general Mutiny took place at the end of the month, the police force rose still later. There was a complete lull for a fortnight after the Meerut and Delhi mutiny. Both at Sitapur and Sialkot different regiments behaved differently. As Medley points out, 'Regiments that had no chance of escape mutinied, and were cut to pieces; others that might have mutinied at any time without let or hindrance, remained faithful till success was no longer possible, and then broke out, and met with a like fate. In many instances, as is well known, Sepoys shot their officers on parade, or murdered them in their own houses; in others, they protected them and their families, supplied them with money, and parted from them with tears. Nor did this difference of treatment...depend on the difference of character in the officers themselves.'[12] Nowhere did the sepoys' conduct conform to a common pattern, and the obvious inference is that they had no pre-concerted plan to follow. Most of the writers dismissed this anomaly as unworthy of investigation. The sepoy, they said, was a child and it was futile to expect any consistency from him. Most of the sepoys were, it is true, illiterate and ill-informed, but they had their own logic and the apparently inconsistent behaviour is capable of explanation.

As Sir Syed Ahmed points out, some correspondence must have been going about the greased cartridge among the sepoys but there was no common plan of resistance. No regiment was prepared to use the obnoxius ammunition first. They were waiting to see what others would do. The deliberate indiscretion of Colonel Carmichael Smyth caused the outbreak at Meerut. The news spread from station to station and the disarming of un-offending, nay, actively loyal, regiments did the rest. If others had been given the chance that was granted to the Nasiri regiment they might have proved themselves equally worthy of confidence. But precautionary and punitive measures and open manifestation of distrust on the part of the officers left the sepoys no alternative but to rise in arms. In the Punjab the sepoys could not possibly have any faith in the sincerity of their officers. Nicholson assured 59th N.I. one day that he was glad he found no reason to disarm them. The next morning they were ordered to pile arms though they had done nothing in the mean time.

Nor were the sepoys or their leaders in league with any foreign power. There is no evidence whatever that the Mutiny was inspired by Russia.

In the King's trial it was alleged that he had sent envoys to Persia. The Persians would doubtless have been glad to foment troubles in India when they were at war with England. A proclamation purporting to come from the Shah, it is true, was once displayed at the Jami Masjid, but it was promptly removed and went unnoticed by the general public of Delhi. In so large a country individuals were not wanting who felt the humiliation of the foreign rule, and the paper in question must have come from one of them. In any case, an isolated event does not prove a conspiracy. Mukund Lal, one of the witnesses at the King's trial, deposed that the grandsons of Mirza Sulaiman Sikoh came from Lucknow to bring about an understanding between the King of Delhi and the Shah of Iran. Mirza Sulaiman Sikoh, a grandson of Shah Alam II, was a refugee at Lucknow. His descendants had embraced the Shia faith to ingratiate themselves with their Shia patron. It is extremely doubtful that they could carry on a secret correspondence with a foreign power under the vigilant eyes of the British Resident without being detected, for their visit to Delhi was no secret. According to Mukund Lal, a man called Sidi Kambar went to Iran with letters from the King. But he himself confessed that he was never admitted to the King's secret and confidential correspondence was entrusted to another secretary of the same name. Hakim Ahsanullah suspected that Mirza Haider (Sulaiman Sikoh's son) had persuaded the King to become a shia and to open correspondence with the Shah who was the temporal head of that church. This suspicion, however, could not be substantial and in any case Mirza Haider's visit took place prior to the annexation of Oudh, and at that date the king of Oudh had no grievance against his British friends and could not possibly countenance any such activity on the part of his proteges. It has never been proved that Sidi Kambar really carried any letter for the Shah. The allegation was based on surmise only. Major Herriot argued that while the Shah promised the governorship of the different provinces of India to his courtiers, the crown of Hindustan was reserved for Bahadur Shah. This does not prove that the King of Delhi had any understanding with the Shah of Iran but it was a clever diplomatic move on the part of that ruler to enlist the support of the King of Delhi and through him, of those Indians who still regarded him as the rightful emperor of Hindustan. Moreover, it is necessary to establish that Bahadur Shah was in correspondence with the sepoys before the 11th May. Sir John Lawrence rightly points out 'that it was hardly possible to suppose that if the Shah had really intended

that a violent attempt would be made to subvert the British power in India, he would have made peace with us just at the critical time of our fortunes, thereby releasing for the succour of India the troops which would otherwise be locked up in Persia. Again if the Shah had been really cognizant of such an attempt, would he not have sent his emissaries to Peshawar and into the Punjab? Had he done this some sign of intrigue would have been certainly perceptible, but none whatever was discovered. In fact all that we have learnt regarding the intrigues of the King and the party shows that he did not look to any conspiracy or combination in India itself; Persia or Russia.'[13] Mr Krishnalal counters these arguments by quoting a letter of Murray, the British Ambassador in Persia, to Lord Canning in which he states that a high-ranking Persian officer had admitted writing letters to the Muslim chiefs in northern India inciting them to insurrection.[14] This confession indicates an intention and nothing more. It requires at least two parties to make a conspiracy. The Sadr-i-Azam refers to a unilateral action on his part and does not say what response his letters evoked. Bahadur Shah sent similar missives to the Raja of Patiala and other princes of north India during the Mutiny but we positively know that they had not espoused his cause. During the First Great War Kaiser William II addressed a number of letters through Raja Mahendra Pratap to the ruling princes of India, but they were not in league with Germany. We do not even know whether the letters mentioned in Murray's despatch ever reached the addresses.

The only foreign power that the rebels ever approached was Nepal and that was after and not before the Mutiny. That fairly disposes of the first question. The movement of 1857 was not pre-planned, it was not engineered by any political party of India or any foreign power hostile to England. It had its origin in sepoy discontent and derived its strength from the widespread disaffection among the civil population. The bulk of the army came to harm by the persistent policy of rendering them harmless.

The movement drew its recruits from many sources. The Chartists in England had in their ranks the currency reformers and other elements that did not subscribe to their political creed. Diverse parties professing diverse views are apt to join hands against the constituted authorities of a state, once active discontent finds an organized channel of expression. The same thing happened in India in 1857. The movement began as a military mutiny but it was not everywhere confined to the army. It should

be noted that the army as a whole did not join the revolt but a considerable section actively fought on the side of the Government. Its actual strength is not easy to compute. Every disarmed regiment was not necessarily disloyal and every deserter was not a mutineer.[15] The fidelity of the 4th N.I. at Kangra and Nurpur was never suspected, and the sepoys disarmed at Agra, were afterwards recalled to service at the instance of Outram.[16] The 6th N.I. after their mutiny at Allahabad quietly dispersed and went home. Roughly speaking, about 30,000 men remained loyal up to the end, a like number was either disarmed or deserted: and nearly 70,000 joined the revolt at different times. If they had simultaneously risen the revolt would have assumed a dangerous magnitude.

The rebels came from every section of the population.[17] If there were Sikhs on the ridge at Delhi, there were Sikhs inside the city, if the tribesmen of the frontier were enlisted to fight the Purbiahs, Vilayetis or Afghans predominated in the rebel force at Dhar and Mandisore. It was fashionable to treat the Mutiny as a Muslim movement at one time and a Hindu movement at another, but at all stages both the communities were well represented in the rebel army. Nana had his Azimullah Khan, Bahadur Khan his Sobharam, and the Rani of Jhansi her trusty Afghan guards. In the early days of the Mutiny the troubles were attributed to high caste Hindus, and it was decided to enlist men of the lower castes and primitive tribes as a counterpoise. But Pasis swelled the rebel ranks in Oudh and Bhils joined them in Rajputana and central India, while the Santals once more decided to fight the Government that protected the money-lenders. No community, class, or caste as such was entirely for or against the Government. Even stray Englishmen were found on the rebel side,[18] and like Highland lairds in '15' and '45' aristocratic families were divided in their sympathies and antipathies.[19]

Care should be taken not to confuse cause with effect and revolt with anarchy. A law-breaker was not necessarily a patriot. When the administration collapsed the lawless elements once more took the upper hand. The Gujars robbed both sides with equal impartiality though they were not interested in the politics of the day. Old feuds were revived and one village fought another, irrespective of their political alignment.[20] The rural area witnessed many minor incidents which were only the offshoots of the main movement but did not contribute to its strength. The Banjaras in Shaharanpur set up a king of their own, the Gujars had different Rajas in different areas.[21] There was the strange case of Devi Singh

in the district of Mathura. His ancestors possessed a few villages and he proclaimed himself the 'King of fourteen villages' under the impression that the British rule had come to an end. When Thornhill went to arrest the rebel chief he discovered that the redoubtable Raja was an ordinary rustic incapable of doing much harm.[22] The Gujar and Banjara Rajas, and the lord of the fourteen villages were the by-products of the revolt. They exploited the opportunities it offered to their personal advantage but did not identify themselves with the cause as such. If the predatory tribes plundered on their own, instances are not wanting of bad characters and needy persons being attracted to the rebel army by prospects of loot. Mahimaji Wadi was a dacoit and he was not inspired by any patriotic impulse when he joined Tatya's troops.[23] A Maharashtra Brahman Belsare left his village home in the south simply to improve his fortunes and he found his way to the rebel camp.[24] Even if we make due allowance for these uncertain elements the revolt commanded popular support in varying degrees in the principal theatre of war, which extended roughly from western Bihar to the eastern confines of the Punjab.[25]

The Presidency of Madras remained unaffected all through, though some slight signs of restlessness were perceived in the army.[26] The educated community unreservedly ranged itself on the side of law and order and condemned the rising in unambiguous terms. In Bengal the sepoys rose in many places but nowhere did they experience any sympathy form the local people. The only evidence to the contrary is furnished by a letter alleged to have emanated from two Dacca notables, Kali Narayan Chaudhury and Moghul Agha Ghulam Ali, in which they have claimed to have financed the rebel regiments. But the Lieutenant-Governor treated it as a cunning fabrication by a designing person with a view to taking 'advantage of present troubles to get up false accusations for the satisfaction of enmity or for extortion.' The informant, of course, quietly made himself scarce.[27] The educated citizens of Calcutta and the landed aristocracy of Bengal did not lag behind their compatriots of Madras in their open denunciation of the Mutiny and the mutineers. In their opinion it was limited only to the army and it was a mutiny pure and simple which periodically occurs in every country.[28] In Assam Maniram Datta was hanged and Madhu Malik, a Bengalee, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for holding treasonable correspondence with Kandarpeshwar Singh, grandson of the last Ahom Raja, and inciting him to recover his ancestral states with the help of the sepoys. Major Halroyd,

Deputy Commissioner of Jorhat, was on bad terms with Maniram and the evidence on which he was convicted was insufficient, if not unsatisfactory, particularly as Halroyd acted as both prosecutor and judge.

In Orissa two Sambalpur princes, Surendra Shahi and Udwant Shahi, then in detention, effected their escape but they were prepared to surrender if free pardon was granted. The chiefs of Orissa generally stood by the Government. The Raja of Porhat created trouble because he felt offended at his supersession by the Raja of Seraikela. Bihar deserves a more careful analysis, for Bihar produced Kunwar Singh, one of the foremost leaders of the revolt. Except for Shahabad the province remained loyal. Muzaffarpur, Chapra, Motihari, and Barh were actually abandoned by the European officers but the districts remained tranquil. The inhabitants of Saran behaved remarkably well, according to Commissioner Samuells. 'In the district of Bihar,' he reports, 'the great mass of the population believed that our rule was at an end and they must shift for themselves, and they proceeded to loot.' The big zamindars not only refrained from lawlessness but helped the Government with men and money. The great mela at Sonepur was held in peace and the Lieutenant-Governor observed, 'there was no organised conspiracy to rebel, mutineers have been met and defeated by levies actually raised in these districts.' In Chotanagpur the risings were confined to a small and discontented section of the primitive tribes and their chiefs, as much from personal animosity as from dislike of the British. It is only in Kunwar Singh's area that the rebels were protected by the fidelity of the people. It is not difficult to guess to what extent the Shahabad peasant was influenced by his personal devotion to the Rajput hero as distinct from the love of the cause.

The Bombay Presidency witnessed risings at Satara, Kolhapur, Nargund, and in the district of Sawant Wadi. It is remarkable that at Satara the call to rise came, not from a Maratha noble, but from a Hindustani Chaprasi.[29] A conspiracy at Bombay was discovered by Forjett, the Police Commissioner, and nipped in the bud. Thus Maharashtra relapsed to its accustomed tranquility after a feeble demonstration of sporadic discontent. It was really strange that the Peshwa's cause should find so little support in his own home province.

It was in the North-Western Provinces, Oudh, and Rohilkhand that the revolt attained the greatest success. But in Rohilkhand, where the British rule was non-existent for nearly a year, the movement found no solid support in Bijnour and Moradabad. We have seen how the Nawab

of Najibabad was ousted from Bijnour by the Hindu zamindars and the district was held for some time by Syed Ahmed, on behalf of the British, practically without any military force. It will not, therefore, be unfair to conclude that the masses in the district were not behind the revolt, and the movement there had degenerated into communal strife. Moradabad, for all practical purposes, was under the control of the loyal Nawab of Rampur. Even in the rest of the province the new regime was not popular despite the sincere effort of Khan Bahadur Khan to conciliate the Hindus. It is true that he had raised an army of forty thousand troops, but Durgadas Bandopadhyaya argues that the recruits were attracted by prospects of employment and had no enthusiasm for any particular cause. Thousands of poor people flocked to the British camp for the same reason. The common folk went wherever they could find employment. In the North-Western Provinces many influential landlords made common cause with the mutineers but many of their compeers remained loyal to their foreign masters. If the Raja of Mainpuri, smarting under a sense of injury, joined the revolt, Prithvipal Singh (Pretty Poll of Russell) was equally ready to place his services at the disposal of the Government. The British never lost complete control over the districts of Meerut and Shaharanpur. Two days after Polwhele's defeat the rich citizens of Agra made a demonstration of their good feelings by waiting on the Lieutenant-Governor. They might not have been sincere in their profession of loyalty but it was definite that they were not on the other side. But for Joti Prasad, the leading businessman of the city, it would have been impossible for the Government to procure the necessary supplies. The villages near Delhi were divided in their allegiance. Raikes claimed that he had positive knowledge of the good feelings of the people of Mainpuri in May 1857. He adds, 'Messrs. Phillipps and Bramly, civil officers of considerable position and experience, arrived at Agra on the 10th of June, having traversed the country from Furuckabad and Etah in the Doab, and from Budaon in Rohilcund, with a very small escort of three or four horsemen.' 'During this same entire month of June, Mr Arthur Cocks, the Judge of Mynpoorie; Mr Watson, the Magisrate of Allygurh; Dr Clark, young Mr Outram of the Civil Service, Mr Herbert Harington, and a few others, heroically maintained their position, at or near Allygurh, after the mutiny and destruction of the station. It was because the people of the country were with and not against us, that this handful of volunteer horsemen were enabled to hold the post amidst swarms of mutineers passing up

the grand trunk road to Delhi.'[30] In the early days of the Mutiny Captain Sanford's journey from Meerut to Ambala and Hodson's ride from Ambala to Meerut with a small retinue proved that the intervening area, as a whole, was not hostile to the English. In the early months of 1858 Medley travelled from Delhi to Kanpur without molestation, 'though the road was not over and above safe, as a brother of Nana's and some 500 of his adherents, were crossing over to get to Calpee.' He had also travelled from Delhi to Mussorie and Mussorie to Agra in perfect safety.[31] But it will not be fair to conclude with Raikes that because small parties of Englishmen did not find the countryside unsafe, the inhabitants of the area were necessarily loyal to the Government. All that can be safely concluded is that they were too passive and too indifferent to commit themselves positively to any one side. Even in the undisturbed provinces like Bengal and Madras there was a feeling of impotent disaffection that delighted in every news of British reverse. That is why the news of Crimea and Persia caused so much excitement and interest in India. Dr Alexander Duff, who had closely associated with educated Indians, correctly analysed their feelings when he wrote, 'Numbers of our Bengali population still continue to view the whole business with something like unreasoning indifference. They can scarcely be said to be either loyal or disloyal, while discontent lurks deeply in the hearts of millions. Many, it cannot be doubted, are at the same time well enough disposed towards our rule; though, to talk of *attachment* would only tend to mislead.'[32]

In estimating the popularity of the movement of 1857 we must not forget that only a determined minority takes an active part in a revolt or revolution while the overwhelming majority remains passive, and an interested section might openly align itself with the existing order. Nowhere did a revolt command universal support. Outside Oudh and Shahabad there is no evidence of that general sympathy which would invest the Mutiny with the dignity of a national war. At the same time it would be wrong to dismiss it as a mere military rising. The Mutiny became a revolt and assumed a political character when the mutineers of Meerut placed themselves under the King of Delhi and a section of the landed aristocracy and civil population declared in his favour. What began as a fight for religion ended as a war of independence for there is not the slightest doubt that the rebels wanted to get rid of the alien government and restore the old order of which the King of Delhi was the rightful representative.

In Oudh, however, the revolt assumed a national dimension though the term must be used in a limited sense, for the conception of Indian nationality was yet in embryo. To the Panjabi the Hindustani was still a stranger, very few Bengalees realized that they belonged to the same nation as men from Maharashtra and the people of Central India and Rajputana did not acknowledge any bond of kinship with the people of the south. The unity of a common bondage had, however, ushered in a vague sense of a different kind of unity, though the idea had not yet taken root in the society in general. But in spite of racial, religious, and linguistic differences the people of India felt that they had something in common as against the Englishman. That is why a Rajput bard found in the jat victory at Bharatpur a theme worthy of his muse, and the Bundela delighted in the British disaster in Nepal. Religion is the most potent force in the absence of territorial patriotism and in 1857 men from all walks of life joined hands with the sepoys in the defence of religion. The fedual lords of Oudh summoned their tenants not only in the name of religion but also in the name of their king. Their king had been unjustly deposed, their country forcibly annexed, and they had not only a political grievance to redress but a moral wrong to undo. As Muhammad Hasan pointed out, the English were the aggressors in the eyes of the Oudh chiefs and the barons felt they were fighting for their king as well as their faith. Feudal loyalty at one time served for patriotism and the overwhelming majority of the people shared the feelings of their leaders. It is true that there were exceptions, there were chiefs like the Rajas of Balarampur and Shahganj, who, either from a sense of loyalty to their new masters or from a conviction that they would ultimately win, found it expedient to stand by the Government. They were amply rewarded for their worldly wisdom. The patriotic leaders like Beni Madho and Devi Baksh steadfastly trod on the path of duty though it led to death, and Russell found indubitable evidence of the public esteem they enjoyed 'in the beclouded countenance of the villagers around' after the fall of Shankarpur.

The patriots of Oudh fought for their king and country but they were not champions of freedom, for they had no conception of individual liberty. On the contrary they would, if they could, revive the old order and perpetuate everything it stood for. The English Government had imperceptibly effected a social revolution. They had removed some of the disabilities of women, they had tried to establish the equality of men in the eye of law, they had attempted to improve the lot of the peasant, and

the serf. The Mutiny leaders would have set the clock back, they would have done away with the new reforms, with the new order, and gone back to the good old days when a commoner could not expect equal justice with the noble, when the tenants were at the mercy of the talukdars, and when theft was punished with mutilation. In short, they wanted a counter-revolution. Whether military success would have ensured it, is another question.

Nor was it a war between the white and the black. All the whites in India were indeed ranged on one side irrespective of their country of origin, but not the black. As Medley points out, 'In fact (counting the camp-followers), for every white man in camp there were certainly twenty black ones.'[33] And but for the camp-followers the white troops would have been ineffective. It was the Indian cook who brought the white soldier his dinner under the heaviest fire, it was the Indian bhisti who brought him his drink in the thickest of the fight, it was the Indian dooly-bearer who carried the wounded out of the danger zone, and the Indian servant who looked after his general comfort.[34] But, even if the non-combatants are left out of account, there was a high proportion of Indian soldiers in the army that suppressed the Mutiny. Of 11,200 effective troops before Delhi no less than seven thousand nine hundred were Indians.[35] It was, therefore, a war between the black insurgents and the white rulers supported by other blacks. It was the case of one slave riveting the fetters of another under the supervision of their common master.

No moral issues were involved in the war of 1857. As in other wars, truth became the first casualty and both sides were guilty of false propaganda. At this distance of time it is not possible to ascertain whether this was deliberately done or the parties responsible were honestly convinced that their information was correct. The struggle may be characterized, as Rees has done, as 'a war of fanatic religionists against Christians' but during the Mutiny the moral principle underlying their respective religions had little influence on the combatants. The Scriptures were quoted in palliation of transgressions by both the belligerents. Christians had won but not Christianity. The Hindus and Muslims were worsted but not their respective faiths. Christianity like western science influenced the Indian mind but the missionary had no notable success in his work of proselytization.

Nor was the war of 1857 a conflict between barbarism and civilization, for neither side observed a single restriction which humanity had imposed and which oriental and occidental nations had tacitly agreed to honour.

It was an inhuman fight between people driven insane by hatred and fear. The non-combatants suffered as badly at the hands of infuriated soldiery as the man in arms; age and sex offered scanty protection against primitive cruelty, and even death brought no immunity from wanton insult. To revive the memory of those evil days may not be desirable but history must record how war debases human character, how thin is the mask of civilization we wear, how readily the dormant passions are awakened, and the Hindu, Muslim, and the Christian alike relapse into the primitive savagery from which religion and civilization had apparently reclaimed their remote ancestors.

It must be conceded that Englishmen had been driven mad by cruel stories of comrades murdered, children butchered, and women dishonoured. They did not pause to examine the sources of these horrid tales, and men of irreproachable character yielded to the impulse of the moment and helped to give them wide publicity. Even men in the holy orders forgot that vengeance was God's and retribution was demanded from the platform and the pulpit. No wonder that the white man thirsted for revenge. Clifford, Assistant Collector of Gurgaon, heard that his sister and Miss Jennings 'were stripped naked at the Palace, tied in that condition to the wheels of gun-carriages, dragged up the "Chandni Chauk", or silver street of Delhi, and there, in the presence of the King's sons, cut to pieces'. Clifford 'had it on his mind that his sister, before being murdered, was outraged by the rebels.' Naturally he thought of nothing but revenge and when Delhi fell he told Griffiths that 'he had put to death all he had come across, not excepting women and children'.[36] A worse story emanated from Bangalore but it concerned Delhi. Forty-eight females most of them girls from ten to fourteen, were reported to have been paraded naked in the streets of Delhi, ravished in broad daylight and then cruelly murdered. Later investigations proved that Miss Clifford and Miss Jennings were put to death in their room in the palace but suffered no indignity and Lecky placed the story of forty-eight women among the *Fictions connected with the Indian outbreak*.[37] Wilberforce passed on the story of a lady, a captain's wife, being boiled alive in *ghee* (melted butter) by the Meerut and Delhi mutineers.[38] Majendie writes of children crucified[39] and other stories of more cruel atrocities gained currency in England, and the British camp in India.

When the British had the upper hand, burning and hanging expeditions became a matter of routine, and no distinction was made between the innocent and the guilty. Captain Oliver Jones remarked, 'It

is sad work shooting and killing these miserable peasants, while the more active rascals who have committed the atrocities escape, but such is always a servile war and such its stern necessities.'[40] Russell heard of indiscriminate killing by Renaud's men from an officer attached to his column. 'The executions of natives in the line of march were indiscriminate to the last degree. The officer in command was emulous of Neill, and thought he could show equal vigour. In two days forty-two men were hanged on the road-side, and a batch of twelve men were executed because their faces were 'turned the wrong way' when they were met on the march. All the villages in his front were burnt when he halted. These 'severities' could not have been justified by the Cawnpore massacre, because they took place before that diabolical act'.[41]

[The] revolt set more responsible Englishmen and Indians thinking. The Mutiny was inevitable. No dependent nation can for ever reconcile itself to foreign domination. A despotic government must ultimately rule by the sword though it might be sheathed in velvet. In India the sword was apparently in the custody of the Sepoy Army. Between the sepoys and his foreign master there was no common tie of race, language, and religion. The Indian could not possibly feel that loyalty for the British crown which the Englishman imbibes with his mother's milk. The traditional obligation of salt had so long held the sepoy and his employers together but it was no substitute for loyalty and patriotism. The sepoy enlisted for the sake of his bread and sooner or later he was bound to recoil against the obvious humiliation of his unnatural position, for as a sepoy it was his duty to hold his country under the foreign heel. He probably did not think in such clear terms but he suffered from a sense of inequality which he could not ignore, for a foreign government may hold the scales even between one individual of the conquered community and another but it cannot be fair to the subject race as against the ruling nation. The Mutiny was not inevitable in 1857 but it was inherent in the constitution of the empire.

The educated Indian at first had no faith in armed rebellion, and the failure of the revolt confirmed him in his conviction. He placed his hope in British liberalism and he had no doubt that as soon as he proved himself worthy of it, the countrymen of Hampden, Milton, and Burke would restore to him his birth-right. But hope deferred made his heart sick and his faith wavered, and a new generation arose who had more confidence in the violent methods of the Italian Carbonari and the Russian

Nihilist than in the discredited method of constitutional agitation. He was also inspired by the memory of the Mutiny and during the two World Wars the Indian revolutionaries did not relax in their efforts to organize another military rising. The British government in India became more and more convinced that in their political struggle with Nationalist India they could not entirely depend upon the army. The non-violent non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi converted the country to a new philosophy and dealt a further blow at the British bureaucracy in India. England retired from India with good grace and undiminished prestige. India has achieved more than the independence for which the heroes of 1857 fought. She has achieved freedom and liberty.

NOTES

1. M. Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Indian Mutiny*, 1884, pp. 2–3.

2. R. H. W. Dunlop, *Service and Adventure with the Khakee Ressalah*, London, 1858, pp. 23–6.

3. *Proceedings of Bahadur Shah's Trial*, p. 85.

4. *Bahadur Shah's Trial*, p. 78.

5. *Bahadur Shah's Trial*, p. 165.

6. W. Edwards, *Facts and Recollections Connected with Indian Rebellion*, 1859, p. 15.

7. *The Thoughts of a native of Northern India on the Rebellion, its Causes and Remedies*, p. 11.

8. Syed Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, p. 3.

9. Major J. A. Spence, Deputy Commissioner, Nagpur to Captain W. H. Chrichton, Deputy Commissioner, Chanda, 3 September, 1858.

10. C. Forjett, *Our Real Danger in India*, London, 1877, p. 50.

11. Foreign Secret Consultations, Nos 344–6, 28 May 1858, National Archives, New Delhi.

12. J.G. Medley, *A Year's Campaigning in India*, 1858, pp. 200–1.

13. *Selections from Punjab Government Record Office*, Vol. VII, Part II, p. 405.

14. Punjab Government Records, Delhi Division Political, 1858, File No.19 quoted in Krishna Lal's *Persian Intrigue at Delhi (1855–57)*.

15. In the early days of the Mutiny every deserter was punished as a rebel.Forjett cites the case of a sepoy accused of desertion who replied, 'Where was I to go? All the world said the English Raj had come to an end, and as being a quiet man, I thought the best place to take refuge in was my own home.'

16. Another instance to the point was two or three companies of Sappers

and Miners. The Sappers and Miners were summoned from Roorki 'and marched cheerfully enough, when an attempt to take away their regimental magazine from them made them break out in open revolt. They fled, were pursued, many cut down, and the rest dispersed to repair to Delhi' and went over to the mutineers there. 'Two or three companies, however, had been quietly disarmed in another part of the station; and on Brigadier Wilson's force leaving for Delhi, these men were rearmed, and accompanied that small column. They had behaved remarkably well ever since'. J.G. Medley, *A Year's Campaigning in India*, pp. 54–5.

17. The Parsis being an exception.

18. Cooper says, a Sergeant-Major of the rebel 28th N.I. joined the mutineers at Delhi. F. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab*, pp. 197–8. General Gough mentions a European called 'Gordon' in the ranks of Delhi mutineers. Gen. Sir H. Gough, *Old Memories*, 1897, pp. 108–10. Rees refers to some of whom there was a young man whose name he did not like to mention. L.E.R. Rees, *A Personal Narrative of the Seige of Lucknow*, 1858, pp. 75–6, 116.

19. Tej Singh, Raja of Mainpuri, joined the revolt. His uncle Rao Bhavani Singh was on the British side. Two Rajput zamindars of Akbarabad fought the British, while the third brother served in the British army. Gough, *Old Memories*, pp. 125–6.

20. Edwards refers to such Pukars or attack by one or a group of villages on another. The villagers had to arm themselves and keep watch in self-defence. W. Edwards, *Facts and Reflections*, p. 43.

21. In the Shaharanpur district a man called Fatua was proclaimed King of the Gujars. H.D. Robertson, *District Duties during the Revolt*, 1859, p. 120.

22. Thornhill says, 'He was a very ordinary-looking man distinguished from other villagers only by his yellow dress.' Yet he had assumed the full title of an independent sovereign—'the lord of beneficence, the source of wealth, the foundation of prosperity, the treasury of grace, the supporter of the poor, the illustrious prince, the Rajah, the great Rajah Dayby Singh, monarch of the fourteen villages, the victorious in war.' Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences*, pp. 102–3.

23. The story of Mahimaji Wadi, a professional dacoit has been told by Y.K. Deshpande in his memoirs.

24. I am indebted to Mahamahopadhyaya D.V. Potdar for the manuscript account of this adventurer.

25. With the exception of Multan area.

26. 'On the 11th the city (Hyderabad, Deccan) and Bazar continued to be agitated by rumours one of which was that one regiment at Secundrabad would assuredly join in any rising against the British Government; this was supposed to allude to the 1st, Madras N.I. whose conduct was then under investigation

for a refusal to obey orders when directed to march during the late relief.' Foreign Secret Consultations, Nos 251–4, 18 Dec., 1857

27. Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, dated 25 March, 1858. Foreign Secret Consultations, Nos 376–9 and K.W., 30 April, 1858.

28. 'The insurrection is essentially a military insurrection. It is the revolt of a lac of sepoys.' *The Mutineers, the Government and the People*, p. 4. On May 22, 1857 the committee of the British Indian Association passed a resolution condemning the disgraceful and mutinous conduct of the native soldiers at Meerut and Delhi. A loyal address was presented by the Maharaja of Burdwan and 2,500 other signatories after the fall of Delhi recounting the benefit of British rule.

29. The Hindustani Chaprasi who was hanged for trying to seduce the 22nd Regiment, Bombay N.I. thus addressed the spectators from the scaffold, 'If they were the sons of Hindus and Mahomedans they would rise, if offsprings of Christians they would remain quiet.' Foreign Secret Consultations, No. 634, 25 Sept. 1857.

30. Raikes, *Notes on the Revolt in the North-Western Provinces of India*, pp. 156–7.

31. Medley, *A Year's Campaigning*, pp. 120–4, 146.

32. A. Duff, *The Indian Rebellion; its Causes and Results*, 1858, p. 180.

33. Medley, *A Year's Campaigning*, p. 65.

34. Medley says, 'The British soldier is a splendid fellow under certain conditions. Feed him well, do not over-work or over-march him, and bring him into the *open* with any number of enemies against him, and he will thrash them, unless the odds are hopeless, and then he will try his best. But on a long and tedious campaign, in a foreign country, and under a trying climate, he is very helpless.' Medley, *A Year's Campaigning*, p. 206.

35. Lt. Gen. J.J. Mcleod Innes, *The Sepoy Revolt: A Critical Narrative*, London, 1896, p. 146. In his final campaign Lord Clyde had some 80,000 English troops under his command 'but by this time the Punjab levies alone are said to have rivalled them in numbers'. Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny*, London, 1896, p. 307.

36. C.J. Griffiths, *Siege of Delhi*, London, 1910, pp. 96–7.

37. Edward Lecky, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, Bombay, 1859, p. 123ff.

38. R.G. Wilberforce, *An Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, London, 1894, p. 23.

39. Lt. V.D. Majendie, *Up among the Pandies*, p. 225.

40. Capt. Oliver J. Jones, *Recollections of a Winter Campaign in India*, 1859, p. 46.

41. Sir W.H. Russell, *My Diary in India in the Year 1858–9.*, 1860, Vol. II, p. 402.

Reflections on the Mutiny*

K. K. Datta

The Indian Revolt of 1857–9 was a gigantic challenge to British rule in India. No doubt the seeds of British political supremacy in India were sown on the soil of Bengal when the battle of Plassey (23rd June, 1757) gave its verdict in favour of the English East India Company. Mir Qasim's opposition to it proved to be fruitless and conjunction of some favourable circumstances helped the English to overpower the three allies (Emperor Shah Alam II, Nawab-Wazir Shuja-uddaulah and Mir Qasim) at Buxar on the 23rd October, 1764. Buxar supplemented the work of Plassey in 'riveting the shackles of the Company's rule' upon Bengal and Bihar. Raja Nandkumar's efforts to counteract British successes also ended in smoke.

The next hundred years saw the rapid expansion of British dominion in India and the growth of an Indo-British administrative system as a corollary to it, which inexorably subjected India to manifold processes of transition—political, economic, social, and cultural. All this generated here diverse fumes of discontent against British rule, all of which being focussed into one, produced the fierce flame of 1857–9. 'The rise and fall of empires', Disraeli significantly observed, 'are not the affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by an accumulation of adequate causes'.[1]

In fact, during this century when the British dominion in India was being transformed into the British Empire of India, there were anti-British outbreaks in different parts of this vast country. The insurrection of Raja Chait Singh of Banaras was one of these. This insurrection had

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reprercussions on the contiguous province of Bihar. Some of the zamindars here were his supporters and rose against the Company. On the 29th August, 1781, Grome, the Collector of Saran, wrote to Mr Ross, Revenue Chief at Patna: 'Reza Cooly Cawn, formerly the *Amil* (Superintendent of Finances, Collector of Revenue) of Sasaram, is at the time with Raja Chait Singh. Many of the inhabitants of that district and probably the Oojains, a tribe of Rajpoots, are sincerely attached to him. Petamber Singh of the family of the Ticcari Raja is most intimately connected with Chait Singh and his dependants are remarkably good soldiers. He has also a number of horsemen in his pay.' It appears from a letter of Mr Ross to Major Hardy, commanding the Patna Militia, dated the 6th October, 1781, that 'One Fattah Shah (of Hathwa) was giving trouble in Saran at this period while several Zamindars and others in the jurisdiction of the Revenue Chief of Patna armed and clothed their dependants in the military accoutrements of the Company'. Narayan Singh, zamindar of Seres and Cotombah (in Gaya District), then resisted the march of the Company's troops near Ramnagar at the foot of the Sasaram hills. For this he was arrested and sent as a Sate prisoner to Dacca on the 5th March, 1786. Raja Akbar Ali Khan of Narhat and Samai also rose in insurrection against the Company at this time. After the treaty of the 21st January, 1798, between John Shore, the Company's Governor-General, and Saadat Ali of Oudh, Wazir Ali who was kept at Banaras as a prisoner, being discontented with his lot, organized an all-India conspiracy against the English. Wazir Ali had his confederates in the north-west, in the south, in Bengal and in Bihar, the most prominent of those in Bihar being Raja Mitrajit Singh of Tikari. In 1831–2 there was a rising of the Coles at Chotanagpur. In the city of Patna itself there was a plot in 1845–6 for revolt against the English, and Raja Kunwar Singh of Jagadishpur was suspected of complicity in it. More formidable than these was the movement led by the highly excited Santals in 1855–7 in a wide area extending from the vicinity of Burdwan to Bhagalpur. Its causes were deeply rooted in the changing conditions of that period and its suppression caused enormous strain to the English East India Company's Government.

By taking into consideration all these, it would not be correct to regard the Revolt of 1857–9 as an isolated and sudden outbreak. 'The Mutiny was not in its inception', writes George Campbell, 'altogether a swift or sudden event—in some sense it had been long preparing.'[2] Rather it was the culmination of accumulated discontent in various quarters

due to different factors for which the new masters of the country were thought to be responsible. Writing in the *Calcutta Review* of 1851, Sir Henry Durand, who later on became Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, gave the following warning to his countrymen: 'Retribution follows misgovernment with an iron step and crushes with inevitable ruin the children and childrens' children of an oppressing nation. Strange as it may seem to some of our readers, this idea is present amongst the millions of India.' Such discontent among certain sections of the people in Bihar on the eve of the outbreak of this movement was referred to by W. Tayler, then Commissioner of Patna, in 1855...in his booklet, entitled *Our Crisis*.

From the time of the outbreak of this movement till today, opinions have been sharply divided about its nature,—whether it was in meaning and origin, a mere military revolt or an organized national revolt aiming at the overthrow of the British Empire. Some contemporaries, including persons directly connected with this movement, have expressed diametrically opposite views regarding it. Soon after the outbreak of the Movement, Canning 'ceased to speak of the mutiny, and called it "a rebellion"—"a revolt"'.[3] He wrote to Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State, on the 8th August, 1859: 'The struggle which we have had has been more like a national war than a local insurrection. In its magnitude, duration, scale of expenditure, and in some of its moral features it partakes largely of the former character'.[4] J.P. Willoughby, a Director of the East India Company, and a member of the British Parliament, observed in a speech delivered by him at a meeting of his constituents on the 16th October, 1857:

> I see no indication of its being a general movement on the part of the people, rising against misgovernment, oppression, and wrong. The masses of the population are with us; the industrial, the agricultural, the commercial classes are all on our side; and, even in the neighbourhood of war-like operations, the resources of the country are at our command. Look, too, at the native chiefs and princes, who, with an insignificant exception, are all on our side, and have given us the readiest help. Both princes and people have shown, by their conduct, that they respect our character and value our rule. The revolt,—then, is a purely military one, confined to a portion of our army only, though certainly a large portion.[5]

In the opinion of Sir John Lawrence it was nothing more than a military rising. But Sir Charles Aitchison, who wrote a biography of Lord Lawrence in 1892, observes that Lord Lawrence's 'view does not account for the

phenomena...the Mutiny of the army assumed in places character of a partial rebellion of the people already made uneasy by military revolt, innovation and change'.[6]

Some contemporary records of the English East India Company regarding the Bihar phase of the movement refer to the active support of the common people behind it. Thus on the 18th June 1857, W. Tayler, Commissioner of the Patna Division, wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor: 'The people of the districts to the west of Chapra are in open revolt'. When some persons were being tried at Muzaffarpur in September, 1857, one of them cried out that 'the supremacy of the English and the Company was at an end, that it was now Koonwar Singh's reign'.[7] Some others in that area also made similar observations during their trial in the month of December next. After the defeat of Captain Dunbar's Regiment at Arrah on the 30th July, 1857, Captain R. P. Harrison, Commanding Detachment of Her Majesty's 37th Regiment, observed in his report to the Adjutant-General, dated the 31st July, 1857: 'The loss we inflicted on the rebels I believe to be too small on account of the darkness and the men being too exhausted to fire. The people of the country turned out against us'.[8] When in the night of the 20th April, 1858, Kunwar Singh was his followers reached Manahar in the Ghazipur district, there, as a contemporary English record notes, 'he found himself amongst friends and the wants of his troops were voluntarily supplied by the villagers who were almost universally in his favour'.[9]

E.A. Samuels, who had succeeded William Tayler as Commissioner of the Patna Division, while communicating his impressions about the movement to A.R. Young, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, in his letter, dated the 25th September, 1858, described it as 'the great Indian rebellion' and observed that the 'movement in Shahabad had all the dignity of a national revolt, and was supported by many of the minor zamindars, and more or less openly by all the Rajput population of the district.'

Though the Rana of Nepal became an ally of the English and his regiments co-operated with the troops of the latter in fighting against the Indian movement, some Nepali leaders with their followers were undoubtedly sympathizers or supporters of the mutineers in the border tracts. On the 11th January 1858, the Magistrate of Tirhut wrote to the Commissioner of Patna that to prevent 'disaffected characters from founding their way into Nepal in the garb of pilgrims' police officers should be stationed 'at different places on the roads leading into the Terrai with

strict orders not to allow any suspicious characters to pass.' On the 27th January, 1858, the Assistant Magistrate of Tirhut was asked by Mr A.L. Dampier, officiating Magistrate, to prevent such persons from going to Nepal during 'the approaching Seoratree festival'. On the 5th February, 1858, the Resident at Nepal informed the joint Magistrate of Sewan that the Nepal *darbar* had decided to keep the mountain passes closed during the ensuing Shivaratri festival, which was to commence from the 12th February. On the 22nd May, 1858, the Collector of Tirhut wrote to the Commissioner of Patna that the Lieutenant of Jaleshwar Cutcherry refused to arrest ten mutineers when asked to do so, by saying that he had 'no authority to give assistance in arresting sepoys without receiving orders from the Government of the Maharajah of Nepal.'

Many of the zamindars in Bihar and North-Western Provinces, whose interests were bound up with those of the English, rendered valuable assistance to the Company's Government for the suppression of the movement. But there were some who took advantage of the prevailing confusion to declare themselves 'independent' and some others who did not wholeheartedly support the Government.

The Company's Government was suspicious of some prominent zamindars of Bihar as being in some way or other connected with the movement. Some letters[10] from the Magistrate of Tirhut to the Commissioner of Patna show that the Maharaja of Darbhanga was suspected of making preparations against the Company. The reasons for it were that he had maintained 'a large number of upcountry men in his service' and a trench was being excavated round his palace buildings. It appears that the Maharaja was prevented from digging the trench.[11] The Magistrate of Shahabad, W.C. Wake, had complaints against the Shahabad zamindars for not rendering him the sort of assistance he expected from them. Thus he mentioned in his report to the Commissioner of Patna, dated the 14th October, 1957:—'Not one Zemindar great or small in the whole of Shahabad proper rendered the slightest assistance to Government before or at the time of the disturbances, and with the exception of the Rajah of Doomraon, have offered any since. Neither at any time has a single deserter been apprehended, through their means. A few of the smaller ones have preferred the loan of their elephants to proceed upcountry, but all my returns calling for them on this subject have not come in.'

Suspicions were entertained by the Company's officers in Bihar also about the Rani of Tikari in the Gaya district. The Commissioner of Patna was for demolishing the fort of Tikari and removing the Rani to Patna. The Lieutenant-Governor did not approve of these measures but guns and ammunition found at Tikari were seized[12] by the local officers of the Company.

Horrible atrocities were perpetrated in the course of this movement. If the sepoys and their associates were guilty of atrocious acts at some places in their plan to assail the authority of the Government in all respects, most severe measures of retribution and punishment were adopted by the military and civil officers of the Government. It is a pity that the fury of passion revealed the worst part in the character of the persons who were responsible for these.

Most of the revolutions draw out latent passions of many and are marked by hideous crimes. The Indian Revolution of 1857 was not an exception to this. The infuriated sepoys and some others no doubt perpetrated dreadful atrocities at Allahabad, Meerut, Delhi, and Cawnpore and Nana Saheb's inhuman acts of cruelty at Cawnpore culminating in the massacre of the prisoners at 'Bibighar' are most shocking episodes in the history of this movement. Most of the English writers, excepting a few, have written much about these and have glossed over the misdeeds of their own countrymen. But there are copious references to the brutal acts on the part of the British soldiers not only in their memoirs, diaries, and private correspondence, but also in official narratives and other kinds of records and contemporary newspapers. The *Englishman* used extremely bitter language in describing what it referred to as atrocities of the Indian sepoys. But there was much of fabrication and exaggeration in its statements. A correspondent of the *Englishman* in North-West India stated: 'The painting the natives all black, and the Europeans in spite of their own declarations, their own letters, all white, is too absurd. How have so many European officers and European ladies escaped if the natives are so blood-thirsty and treacherous as represented. We state that the ladies of Gwalior were never in the hands of the Sepoys. Why, Lieutenant Proctor was taken from the midst of ladies and shot, and the ladies were not harmed. You state that late Colonel Wiggens (L.M. Wiggens, an officer blockaded in Kanpur with Sir H. Wheeler) speaks of daily mutilations. Yes, but it is the mutilations by shot and shell, not

the mutilations the sepoy-atrocity mongers speak of. Every one of the atrocities par excellence that has been described so as to admit of its being enquired into, has been proved a fabrication.' The Magisrate of Shahabad reported to E.A. Samuels, Commissioner of the Patna Division, on the 29th January, 1858: 'There is one redeeming feature in disturbances in the district...except in the case of the soldiers retreating from Arrah, there has been no cold-blooded assassination of Europeans'. Samuels recorded in his letter to the Bengal Government, dated 25th September, 1858, that some of them who 'fell into his (Kunwar Singh's) hands and those of his relative Reetbhanjan Singh, were fairly treated'.

Suppression of the movement of 1857–9 was marked by indiscriminate ruthlessness and vengeance on the part of the Government. In different parts of India, Government retributions took various forms, viz., execution of the prominent leaders, longterm imprisonment for many varying between seven and fifteen years, transportation of a good number, forcible realization of collective fines from the rural folk on the basis of a new Act passed by the Government, confiscation of properties worth more than the damages which the movement caused, burning of village after village, and chastisement of the villagers in other ways. The *Hindu Patriot* of the 8th July, 1858, noted: 'For some time every law of nature and man was set aside by the army of retribution. Indiscriminate slaughter, violation of women, the burning of whole tracts of inhabited country, the hanging, and blowing away of men by hundreds, the infliction of skilfully wrought bodily and mental torture, were the daily acts of civilized administrators and commanders. More than this was done to men in lower grades of life.' As an instance it quoted the following:—'We continue as of yore. Nothing occurs to disturb the serenity of our imprisonment. A force was dispatched some days ago against an insurgent Jhat village, across the Jumna, and about twenty miles from this. It consisted of eighty-eight men of the 3rd Europeans, two guns, and thirty mounted militia (Europeans and East Indians), under Captain Pond. They stormed the village, and killed about four hundred men. Three hundred and thirteen dead bodies were counted in the streets, besides those killed by the guns in front of the village, and sabred by the cavalry in the field when trying to escape. It is significant that none of the enemy were merely wounded, and not a prisoner was taken. One fought like a savage and spared none, but crying out, 'Remember our women at

Cawnpore'. They shot and bayoneted without mercy. After they had slain every man they could find, I lament to say, that they did what infuriated soldiers too frequently do when they take cities by assault—they ravished the women. The offices were unable to control their men, and till the village was set on fire, these scenes were repeated.'

NOTES

1. George Earl Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, Vol. IV, p. 91.
2. Sir George Campbell, *Memories of My Indian Career*, Vol. I, p. 213.
3. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War, in India*, Vol. I, p. 617.
4. Quoted in S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858–1905*, p. 1.
5. Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, Vol. II, p. 422.
6. Sir Charles Aitchison, *Lord Lawrence*, pp. 75–6.
7. Letter from H.L. Dampier, Magistrate of Muzaffarpur, to R. Forbes, Commissioner under Section VII, Regulation XIV of 1857, dated 15th September, 1857.
8. Ball, Vol. II, p. 110.
9. Secret Consultations, 28th May, 1859, No. 59.
10. Dated 2nd December, 1857, and 15th May, 1858.
11. Ibid.
12. Minute of Sir F. J. Halliday on the Mutiny, 1858.

PART III

Restorative Movement

The Great Rebellion*

'Talmiz Khaldun'†

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

In the wake of the initial success of the rebels came the weakening and disintegration of the strong anti-British combine. The hatred of foreign rule had brought the rebels together; different concepts of 'free' India threw them apart. Feudal rivalry rose between the Moghuls and the Mahrattas. It was because of this that Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the last Peshwa, refused to go to Delhi. He feared he would be 'overshadowed by the Moghul court,' and lose his individual power and influence among the host of princes.[1]

The feudal barons who fomented or acquiesced in, or later joined the rebellion in a bid to regain their 'absolute rule in the zamindari'[2] were shocked to find the control of the movement gradually slipping out of their hands. A contemporary writer in the *Calcutta Review* (1858) noted that 'not a few of the rajas were wise enough to see that a servile war, an uprising of the lower against the higher classes, would not answer their purpose.'[3] The plans chalked out by the rebels for the political and economic reconstruction of the country show that the Rajas had assessed well.

Bahadur Shah was declared *Shahenshah-e-Hind* on May 11, 1857. But in truth he was reduced to a mere nonentity in the first week of July—that is, towards the close of the first phase of the revolt. The rebels of Delhi issued a *Parwanah*,[4] after the arrival of General Bakht Khan, outlining the structure of the new state. Bahadur Shah was again formally

*Previously published as Chapter One in P. C. Joshi (ed.) *Rebellion 1857*, Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1957. This is a section of the chapter.

†'Talmiz Khaldun' is the pseudonym used by Satinder Singh at the time of the publication of *Rebellion 1857*.

proclaimed the Emperor of India, but the real executive power was vested in the Court of Administration.[5] The Court was to administer the state, maintain peace and order, collect land revenue from the sub-divisions and raise loans from the Mahajans,[6] defend the realm, and prosecute wars.[7] The Emperor had promised the Court that 'in reference to you no representation of any party whatever will be heeded; and in all such orders as may emanate from your Court, none of the servants of the State, nor the Princes Royal, will in any way interfere.'[8]

The Court of Administration was to consist of ten members; six from the army and four from the civilian departments.[9] The representation of the army was equally distributed among its three branches—infantry, cavalry, and artillery.[10] Members were to be elected by a majority vote from amongst 'intelligent, wise, capable, and experienced men who had also to their credit a record of past faithful service.'[11] The last condition is not wholly intelligible in view of the fact that only a few of the rebels had any claims on past services. Perhaps, and one cannot be certain about this, it was for this reason precisely that this condition was not made absolute. For, it was specifically provided that this condition could be waived in the case of very capable and intelligent persons.[12] The civilian members of the Court were to be selected in the same manner by their respective (?) departments.[13]

One out of the ten members of the Court was to be elected President[14] (*Sadr-e-Jalsa*) and another Vice-President[15] (*Naib Sadr-e-Jalsa*) by a majority vote. The President of the Court had two votes. Each member of the Court was in charge of the department of the state from which he had been elected.[16] He was assisted by a Committee, consisting of four members of the Court. Each Committee could have as many secretaries attached to it as were required. Proposals passed by a majority vote in a Committee were forwarded to the Court for approval through the member-in-charge.[17] No specific mention was made of the headships of the departments whose representatives on the Court were elected President and Vice-President. Presumably, they were to act as the heads of their respective departments in addition to their duties as President and Vice-President. 'The government at Delhi,' write Sir George Campbell,

> 'seems to have been a sort of constitutional Milocracy. The King was king and honoured as such, like a constitutional monarch; but instead of a Parliament, he had a council of soldiers, in whom power rested, and of whom he was in no degree a military commander. No Arabic or Persian names, forms or terms appear

to have been introduced; but, on the contrary, English terms and modes of business were generally adopted. All petitions seem to have been presented to the King, but the great authority to which all of them on all matters were referred (by order endorsed on the petition), was the "Court", a body composed of a number of colonels, a brigade major, and a secretary. All the colonels, etc., were sepoys who had made their mark.'[18]

Emperor Bahadur Shah had the right to attend the session of the Court.[19] No decision of the Court was enforceable in the state without the signature of the Emperor. If a resolution of the Court was disapproved by the Emperor, it was to be re-considered by the Court.[20] In actual practice, however, the Court resolved as it chose[21] and compelled the King to affix his seal thereon. In his defence statement submitted to the military commission especially appointed in 1858 to try him, Bahadur Shah stated:

'The mutinous soldiers had established a Court in which all matters were deliberated upon, and decisions taken. But I never took any part in their conferences.... As regards the orders under my seal and under my signatures, the facts are that from the day soldiery came and killed the European officers, and made me a prisoner, I remained so thereafter. They caused to be prepared papers they thought fit, brought them to me and compelled me to affix my seal. Sometimes they brought the rough draft orders and had their copies made by my secretary. While at others they brought letters in original intended for despatch, and left their copies in my office. Hence several rough drafts in many different hands have been filed in the proceedings. Frequently, they had my seal fixed on empty unaddressed envelopes. I neither knew the contents of the letters nor as to whom they were being sent.... My life...being in danger, I could not do anything in the matter.... They accused my servants...and Queen Zeenat Mahal of being in league with the British. They even threatened to kill them (the servants) and wanted me to hand over the Queen to them as a hostage.'[22]

On one occasion Bahadur Shah felt so 'wearied and helpless that he resolved to relinquish the title of the Emperor, fraught with cares and troubles,' and 'pass the remaining days in service acceptable to the God.'[23] Once he even threatened to commit suicide by swallowing a diamond.[24]

The Court held two kinds of sessions;[25] the ordinary session was held for five hours each day in the Red Fort; special sessions were held for the transaction of any urgent business at any time of the day or night.[26] The rebels must have recognized the necessity of unanimity and expedition, for they had provided for the process of guillotine to safe-guard against frivolous proposals. Thus an amendment to a proposal

could not be moved unless it was supported by four out of ten members, and the Court could always apply the guillotine after three speeches had been made, on the plea of urgency.[27] In all matters, a majority vote of the Court was essential. But any decision taken in the absence of a member was applicable to his department[28] also. This implies joint responsibility.

To maintain secrecy, the Parwanah[29] ordained that the meetings of the court would be *in camera*. Any disclosure, implicit or explicit, of its proceedings by any of the members was punishable by his removal from the Court. The same punishment was prescribed for any sort of deception towards the state, or for showing partiality towards a person or a body of persons.[30]

The procedure formulated by the rebels was neither comprehensive nor conformable with the parliamentary rules in any modern state. The rebels had no experience of parliamentary government, much less of drafting of procedural rules. All the same the underlying basis of the procedure seems to be the Panchayat system. It appears as if the Court was devised primarily to satisfy the democratic instinct of their own class whose socio-political organization has always been the traditional Panchayat.

A Parwanah,[31] dated August 8, 1857, the only one of its kind available, gives us a clue to the nature of business transacted by the Court. This Parwanah was some kind of a summons to the members of the Court to attend a special meeting of the Court, the agenda for which included the problem of proper administration of the City of Delhi, better administration of supplies, more efficient upkeep of the army, better distribution of the *dak*, and the raising of loans from the Mahajans. The Court also issued frequent orders and circulars on discipline in the army, the suppression of corrupt practices, abuse of authority, and rapacity.[32]

Not only was the nature and extent of authority exercised by the Court wide and comprehensive; the Court was also not prepared to tolerate any encroachment upon its authority by extraneous influences. In military matters, for instance, neither the Emperor nor the royal princes had any effective voice. In a letter dated June 26, 1857, the Emperor complained to his son, Mirza Moghal:[33]

'Formerly some troopers took up quarters in the Hayat Baksh and Mehtab Gardens. Owing to the injury caused to these gardens through their stay, the troopers were

made to quit on our orders. But now again nearly two hundred soldiers...are staying...there; you are, therefore, directed to speak to the members of the Court and have them removed.'

On another occasion, Bahadur Shah deplored that the army officers indulged in the 'practice of coming into the Court carelessly dressed and in utter disregard to the forms of respect to the royalty.... They came galloping on their horses to places...which not even Nadir Shah nor Ahmad Shah, nor any of the British Governor-Generals of India even entered on horseback.... Do the army have the welfare of the State at heart?'[34] cried the last Moghul in despair.

The plight of the royal princes was even worse. They did not wield any influence at all. In fact, the hopes of the princely order were being frustrated at every step by the 'headstrong' and 'insolent' soldiery. Mirza Moghal, heir-apparent and Commander-in-Chief of the rebel army until the arrival of General bakht Khan on July 1, 1857, wrote to Bahadur Shah:

'Your Majesty is aware that before Bakht Khan came, active operations of war were carried on daily and without any let or hindrance.... Today, when I went outside the city with my regiments to attack the enemy, he interposed and kept the whole force standing inactive. He wanted to know under whose orders they had been brought out, and commanded that they were not to proceed without his permission, (in the end) he forced us to return.'[35]

The tussle which ensued between Mirza Moghal and General Bakht Khan, and which filtered down to their respective followers, was not merely personal bickering. In fact, the princely order could no longer place any confidence in the infantry.[36] The jealousy, strife, and conflict between the heir-apparent and the revolutionary General were, beneath the surface, a struggle between the dying aristocracy and the new force of peasant proprietors. It was, therefore, not at all surprising that the feudal barons began soon after to groan under the levelling attempted by the rebels, and lost much of their enthusiasm in the midst of the struggle. 'The *Shahzadas*,' writes the Rev. Cave-Browne, 'began to feel their condition perilous and tried to open negotiations (with the British).'[37]

The Court of Administration was also the highest judicial authority. It established law courts, appointed judges, and regulated the judicial procedure for civil and criminal cases. The police officers as well as the civil servants were appointed by the Court, and were responsible to and

could be removed by it.[38] It tried to eradicate bribery and corruption, and it did this with a heavy hand. The man in the street could appeal to the Court in all cases of alleged abuse of authority and oppression.[39]

In the sphere of finance, too, the Court was supreme. The revenue officials were appointed and could be removed by it alone.[40] It also enjoyed authority to collect land revenue and other taxes and levies.[41] None except the Court could raise loans on behalf of the state. Officials were required to forward immediately to the Court any Parwanah that they received from any other quarter for raising funds. They were also instructed not to arrest without the summons of the Court a person refusing to lend money.[42] Once when Mirza Sultan Khizr tried to raise funds on his own, the Court strongly protested and asked the Emperor to warn the princes against doing so.[43] The Emperor refused to give his assent to a suggestion made by Mirza Moghal that the officials of the royal household, instead of the agents of the Courts, should collect money, in spite of the Mirza's plea that it would help raise more funds.[44] He reminded the Mirza that the Court was the sole authority in that matter.[45]

It cannot be denied that the Court failed miserably in the matter of raising loans. The propertied classes appear to have been too frightened at the demand of the rebels to advance them loans, or at their 'innovation' to abolish landlordism.[46] On their part the peasant-soldiers were unable to entertain any idea of nationalization of land due to the nature of their class origin. The Mahajans refused to part with money except under duress. The wholesalers, and retailers, too, refused to sell their goods on credit to the new state which they were convinced was bankrupt and unstable.[47] They were not wholly unjustified in view of the fact that the Court had been unable to restore peace and order in the City.[48] Hoarding, profiteering, and black-marketing reduced the people to misery. The Court did, it is true, make heroic efforts to save the State from economic ruin. It tried to fix and control prices.[49] But in the absence of rationing, assured supplies, and a stable administration, price control did not and could not succeed.

Necessity forced the Court to heavy and arbitrary taxation. This cannot be denied, though, that the incidence of taxation fell almost entirely on the classes which could pay.[50] Tax measures left the man-in-the-street untouched. On the contrary, the Court tried to give him relief. It passed orders for liquidating the zamindari system and giving proprietary right to the actual tiller.[51] It is evident from the orders passed by the Court

that it had intended to overhaul the system of revenue assessment. Its authority was, however, too short-lived to accomplish the task.

A similar Court of Administration was set up in Lucknow. Like the Delhi rebels, the Lucknow insurgents crowned Birjis Qadr, a natural son of the ex-King of Oudh. On his elevation to the throne, or rather on his being created Nawab Vazir of Oudh—for his authority was subordinated to that of the Emperor of Delhi—his mother and Mammu Khan enjoyed power that was checked only by the caprice of the troops to whom their elevation was due.[52]

The real power was, in fact, vested in a minister and a Court of Administration.[53] The Court consisted of the King's principal servants, of the rajas and great landed proprietors of the area, and the self-created high dignitaries of the army. The Court deliberated upon how operations against the British were to be conducted. It had its own commander-in-chief; formerly, the commander-in-chief was Hishmat-ud-Dowlah, a brother-in-law of the ex-King. The Court had appointed generals of divisions, brigadiers and colonels, and had apparently, a well constituted and well regulated army.[54] In truth, however, the sepoys themselves elected their officers, and the officers their commanders—all in the name of the King. But if, as happened not infrequently, they happened to displease the gallant sepoys, a debating assembly would immediately be called by the privates, at the conclusion of which they would usually be degraded or executed.[55] Thus, the new dignitaries were not treated with respect, and they did not command that obedience which military officers are entitled to in a disciplined army. Their offices, except the very highest, were replete with danger.[56] The rebel troops paid no heed to their commanders, and did what they liked.[57]

NOTES

1. G.W. Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, (1904) Vol. I, p. 420; T.R. Holmes, *A History of the Indian Rebellion*, (5th ed., 1898), p. 228.

2. A Proclamation issued by a Moghul Prince stating the aims of the rebels. Quoted by Asoka Mehta, *The Great Rebellion.*, (1946), pp. 26–31.

3. *Calcutta Review*, 1858, p. 64.

4. Bundle 57, Fo. No. 539–41 (Urdu), dt. nil.

5. Their own words. Ibid., rule No. 7.

6. Indigenous bankers, moneylenders or workers.

7. *Op. cit.*, preamble.

8. Bundle 153, Fo. No. 12 (Persian), August 19, 1857.
9. Bundle 57, Fo. No. 539–41, rule No. 2.
10. Ibid., rule no. 24.
11. Ibid., rule no. 4.
12. Ibid., rule no. 5.
13. Ibid., rule no. 5.
14. Their own words. Ibid., rule no. 3.
15. Their own words. Ibid., rule no. 3.
16. Ibid., rule no. 11.
17. Ibid., rule no. 11
18. Sir George Campbell, *Memoirs of My Indian Career*, (1893) Vol. II, p. 356.
19. Bundle, 57, Fo. 539–41 (Urdu), rule no. 8.
20. Ibid., rule no. 7.
21. *Trial of Bahadur Shah*, (1895), pp. 137–140. Prince Zaheeh-ud-Din alias Mira Moghal wrote to the Emperor that he had a talk with General Bakht Khan and other members of the Court, but they refused to accept His Majesty's proposals. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 155 (Persian), dt. nil.
22. *Trial of Bahadur Shah*, Ex-King's Defence Statement, p. 137–140.
23. *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, Vol. 19, No. 21, May 24, 1857. Also, *Trial of Bahadur Shah*, pp. 134–5, quoted in full in a letter from the King to Mirza Moghal dt. nil.
24. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 260 (Persian), August 9, 1857.
25. Bundle 57, Fo. nos 539–41 (Urdu), rule no. 3, dt. nil.
26. Bundle 57, Fo. nos 539–41 (Urdu), rule no. 3.
27. Ibid., rule nos 8, 9 and 10.
28. Ibid., rule no. 8.
29. Ibid., rule nos 4, 8.
30. Ibid., rule nos 4, 6.
31. Bundle 57, Fo. no. 285 (Urdu), August 8, 1857,
32. Ibid., Fo. nos 9, 120 and 276 (Urdu), dated 13 and 14 July, and 8 August, 1857, respectively; also see Bundle 57, Fo. no. 56 (Urdu), July 3, 1857.
33. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 195 (Persian), July 23, 1857.
34. *Trial of Bahadur Shah*, pp. 134–5. Copy of an order from the King to Mirza Moghal, dt. nil.
35. Ibid., Fo. no. 185 (Persian), August 7, 1857.
36. Ibid., Fo. no. 49 (Persian), August 7, 1857.
37. Rev. J. Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, (1861) Vol. I, p. 140. H.H. Greathed in his *Letters Written During the Siege of Delhi*, (1858), writes on August 9, 1857: 'I am beginning to get letters from the princes. They declare they have been all along fondly attached to us and that they only want to know what they can do for us' (pp. 205–6). King Bahadur Shah, it may be remembered, addressed a letter to the Lt. Governor of Agra on May 11, 1857, informing him

of the arrival of the rebels from Meerut. On July 4, 1857, General T. Reed, Commander-in-Chief of the British besieging force at Delhi, wrote to Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner, Punjab, informing him that if 'we would guarantee his (King's) life and pension, he would open the gates (of the City or Red Fort) for us.' Zeenat Mahal, the favourite wife of the King, offered 'to exercise her influence with the King, to bring about some arrangement' (Greathed, *Letters Written During the Siege of Delhi*, p. 217).

38. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 137 (Urdu), July 20, 1857; Petition of the members of the Court to the King.

39. Ibid.

40. Bundle 129, Fo. no. 6 (urdu), August 18, 1857.

41. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 137 (Urdu), July 10, 1857.

42. Bundle 129, Fo. no. 61 (Urdu), August 8, 1857.

43. Bundle 153, Fo. no. 17 (Persian), dt. nil; Bundle 57, Fo. no. 532 (Persian), August 19, 1857.

44. Bundle 153, Fo. no. 16 (Persian), dt. nil.

45. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 248 (Persian), August 6, 1857.

46. Bundle 199, Fo. no. 137 (Urdu), July 10, 1857. It reads as follows: 'If on inspection of the documents, and on the testimony of their witnesses, viz., the *Kanungo* (Registrar of Landed Rights), the *Patwari* (Village Accountant), and other respectable men of the place, it shall be clearly proved that the claimant had really been the land-holder...the settlement will be made in his favour.'

47. Bundle 106, Fo. no. 20 (Urdu), June 6, 1857; also Bundle 126, Fo. no. 20 (Urdu), June 1, 1857.

48. Bundle 40, Fo. no 297 (urdu), August 9, 1857.

49. Bundle 129, Fo. nos 42, 49, 57, 79, 85, 100, 101, and 102 of various dates; also Bundle 130, Fo. nos 5, 9, 17, 22, 35, 55, 61, 67, 86, 90, 120, 121, 125, 150, 158, 171, 182, 188, 201, and 202 of various dates.

50. Bundle 153, Fo. no. 6 (Persian), July 28, 1857.

51. Bundle 153, Fo. no. 16 (Persian), dt. nil.

52. Capt. G. Hutchinson, *Narrative of the Mutinies in Oudh* (1859), p. 161; Rees, *op. cit.*, p. 261. Hutchinson gives the names of the following five members of the Lucknow Court of Administration: (i) Capt. Raghunath Singh; (ii) Capt. Umrao Singh; (iii) Capt. Imdad Hussein; (iv) Darogha Wajid Ali; and (v) Mammu Khan Sharf-ud-Dowlah. (p. 180).

53. L.E.R. Rees, *A Personal Narrative of the Seige of Lucknow*, (1858), p. 262.

54. J. Talboys Wheeles, *India Under British Rule*, (1886), p. 265.

55. L.E.R. Rees, *A Personal Narrative of the Seige of Lucknow*, pp. 262–3.

56. Ibid., pp. 262–3.

57. McLeod Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny*, (1896), p. 152.

The Struggle for Succession*
Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857

E. I. Brodkin

In the summer of 1857 British power throughout much of northern India was suddenly and violently subverted. Yet in spite of the fact that the uprising has perhaps commanded more attention than any other single event in Indian history the debate over its nature and causes still rages and 1857 remains a sensitive and highly controversial issue.

The problem can be partly attributed to the difficulty in escaping from the terminology of the period. After the re-establishment of British power, the victors were eager to sort out friend from foe, to reward the one and punish the other, and so descriptive adjectives such as *loyal* and *rebel* became permanently fixed to a variety of individuals. It can be argued, however, that while this terminology can in some instances serve a useful purpose, perhaps more often than not the simplistic categorization of the Indian actors in the drama as loyal or rebel serves mainly to confuse.

A case in point is the Nawab of Farrukhabad whom R. C. Majumdar has characterized as one of the 'principal leaders'[1] of the rebellion. This 'principal leader' who was to be condemned to death[2] wrote as early as 9 October 1857 that he was only co-operating with the rebels because he was being held 'in the clutches of these mannerless brutes'.[3] He said he feared for his life and honour and was awaiting assistance from the British Government.[4] The rebels, he wrote, 'are a thorn in my side and I do not have the resources to turn them out'.[5] Apparently not only the Emperor Bahadur Shah was acting as a prisoner of the rebels but other 'principal leaders' were themselves prisoners. The dividing line between rebel and loyal can be very obscure indeed.

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It is not being suggested that the customary terminology be eliminated altogether. It would be quite unreasonable to claim that 1857 had neither rebels nor loyalists. What is being suggested is that the vast majority of the Indian population, including the majority of the politically active population, cannot be designated accurately as either rebel or loyal. The disappearance of British authority in much of northern India was followed by the re-emergence of traditional rivalries in the area. The British withdrawal marked the beginning of a gigantic power struggle—the struggle for succession. In this struggle for succession such concepts as loyalty and rebelliousness were very often of secondary importance, when indeed they were of any importance at all. It was the struggle for succession that mattered—the filling of the vacuum created by the British departure.[6]

At the time of the uprising the British were convinced that their difficulties could be attributed largely to Muslim instigation. When the lapse of British control led to the re-emergence of traditional rivalries and to a struggle for succession among these traditional rivals, the British tended whenever possible to view the Hindu factions as loyal while the Muslim factions were seen as rebel. Thus traditional Hindu-Muslim rivalry was considered within an entirely artificial framework. When, finally, it became clear that the union jack would be flying once more in Bareilly and Lucknow, the Hindu could easily play the role of loyalist that the British had already assumed for him while the Muslim, having already been assigned the designation of rebel, now had no alternative other than to fight not only the *loyal* Hindu but the British as well. Therefore, whereas labels such as rebel and loyal may be irrelevant in July 1857, it is the labels themselves that may be determining the behaviour of the participants several months later. The labels do not continue to serve merely as descriptive adjectives, however misleading. They can actually come to be major behavioural determinants.

That labels can determine behaviour can be demonstrated quite clearly in the district of Bijnor in Rohilkhand. Rohilkhand had been a rich Rajput-dominated province of the Mughal Empire known as Katehr. Its name was changed in the eighteenth century when the Rajputs were supplanted by the Rohillas or Pathans under the leadership of Ali Muhammad Khan and Hafiz Rahmat Khan. The fiercely bitter rivalry between the Pathans and the Rajputs never fully abated although the Pathans remained the dominant force. With the removal of the British in 1857, the traditional Pathan leadership, all descendants of the eighteenth-

century Pathan élite, took control. The state of Rampur, that part of Rohilkhand which had been able to maintain its independence following the Hastings-inspired Company invasion of 1774, remained in the hands of the loyal British ally, the Nawab of Rampur, Yusaf Ali Khan. The Nawab was also the dominant force in Moradabad while the districts of Bareilly, Budaun, and Shahjahanpur were controlled by the rebel leader of Rohilkhand, Khan Bahadur Khan, the grandson of Hafiz Rahmat Khan. It was only in the district of Bijnor that neither of these men held sway. Here the most powerful Pathan was Mahmud Khan, the Nawab of Najibabad, the great-grandson of the man who had been Prime Minister to the Emperor Shah Alam, Najib-ud-daula.

In Rohilkhand, then, following the mutiny of the troops, it was the Pathans who emerged victorious in the struggle for succession. But because it was the Pathans who generally succeeded the British, it was also the Pathans, with the obvious exception of the Nawab of Rampur; who were labelled rebels. In the district of Bijnor, it was Mahmud Khan, the Nawab of Najibabad, who was to be falsely condemned as a rebel for re-establishing traditional Pathan authority over reluctant Rajput Thakurs claiming to be friends of the British.

The total misrepresentation of the role of Mahmud Khan was initiated by the Company official closest to the scene, the District Magistrate and Collector, Alexander Shakespear. The myth of the Nawab's rebelliousness was perpetuated by the fact that following the restoration of British authority Shakespear was instructed to compile for the district a *Narrative of Events* relating to the uprising. In the absence of a comprehensive account available from the defeated side, the *Narrative* has come to be very heavily relied upon. Even so fine an historian as S. N. Sen has been led to accept a host of fallacious reporting.[7] Indeed, that the history of Bijnor during the uprising has never been accurately written can be attributed to the fact that every account has been based either wholly or in part on the testimony of Alexander Shakespear. And Shakespear's *Narrative* presents a virtually complete distortion of the true state of affairs.

In his report to Robert Alexander, the Commissioner of Rohilkhand, Shakespear stated that prior to his departure from the district upon the outbreak of disturbances an angry Mahmud Khan appeared

> in consequence of a report having reached him that I intended to make over the treasure to the Chowdrees of Huldour. The idea had been started, but never seriously entertained, for the Rajpoots had expressed themselves unable to protect

it, and such a measure would at once have produced the crisis which it was of such vital importance to postpone as long as possible. The animus shown by the Nawab in this instance, taken in connection with all that was passing around us, proved clearly that he and his retainers were not to be trusted for a moment, and that an outbreak might be precipitated by the smallest accident. ... I determined to send off Mrs Shakespear and the rest of the party that night across the river...but as it was clear that to attempt to do this, without the knowledge and consent of the Nawab, would not only be impossible but probably occasion an outbreak about midnight I sent the Sudder Ameen to Mahmood Khan to tell him what was in contemplation. On his asking to speak with the Nawab apart, the reply was that those about him were all Pathans, and had no secrets from each other, but on being pressed he went aside, and when the Sudder Ameen told him of our intentions to send the rest of the party off at once and follow ourselves afterwards, he replied that he could not longer answer for his followers, and that all must leave together, and he refused to come to me, saying he had already advised our going, and had nothing more to say. On hearing this I was satisfied that there was nothing to be done but to quit the district. ... I prevailed upon the Nawab to come to me about 2 a.m. of the 8th of June, and then informed him that I had decided to see my wife and the rest of the party across the river, but hoped not to be absent for more than ten days or so, and that I trusted he would do his best to preserve order during my absence and at the same time I gave him a paper stating that I made over the zillah to him for the present, and looked to him to keep all public and private property safe until my return. In this document I carefully avoided giving the Nawab any authority to collect revenue, but I told him, as he would have to incur heavy charges, he would be at liberty to expend money from the Treasury, and all that would be required from him would be a regular account: In common with most Englishmen in the North-West Provinces, I was in the belief that our troops had only to appear before Delhi to ensure its fall, and when I calculated upon returning in ten days or so, I fancied I was allowing a good margin. The speedy recapture of Delhi would have at once dissipated all the Nawab's hopes, and a small reliable force, which I fully calculated upon obtaining, would have brought us back in sufficient strength to enable us to hold our own.[8]

Shakespear went on to say that Mahmud Khan provided him with virtually no assistance for the journey, leaving him to fend largely for himself. He also stated that the Nawab proceeded to announce:

'The people are God's, the country the Padshah's, and the order (or Government) Nawab Mahmood Khan's', in which his own name was substituted for the 'Company', the usual proclamation running thus. 'The people are God's, the country the Padshah's, and the order (or Government) the Sirkar Company

Bahadoor's.'... One of the first things done by the Nawab was to take up the treasure from the well [where Shakespear had put it] and dispatch it to Nujeebabad, and then...he proceeded to dispatch a confidential servant to Delhi to obtain authority from the ex-King to his holding the district in his name.[9]

According to the *Narrative* Mahmud Khan then moved from one treasonous and rebellious act to another until British forces finally reoccupied the district on 21 April 1858.

What Shakespear was saying then was that he knew from the first that Mahmud Khan would join the rebels, that Mahmud Khan behaved callously towards British fugitives, that Mahmud Khan immediately contacted the Emperor and that Mahmud Khan by his subsequent behaviour proved the original assessment of him to have been correct. None of this is true.

A debate of considerable intensity relating to the activities of the Nawab of Najibabad developed among government officials following the execution on 23 April 1858 of his brother, Jalal Uddin Khan, commonly known as the younger Nawab of Najibabad. The execution was a direct violation of the orders of Government which allowed the death penalty only for 'leaders'. William Muir, the head of the hastily improvised intelligence apparatus, explained that the word leader

> is not used in the technical sense of the holder of some petty office under the Rebel chiefs, which may have invested the person holding it with a little authority; but in the sense of an instigator, stimulator, and director of rebellion.[10]

Jalal Uddin surrendered himself to the British the day after the reoccupation of Najibabad on 18 April and was shot on 23 April. At his 'trial' the only incriminating evidence was provided by Alexander Shakespear.[11] 'There were several extenuating circumstances,' Shakespear allowed, 'but...he met a deserved death.'[12] Even he had to admit, however, that

> Though Julaloodeen was undoubtedly guilty of rebellion he certainly did not take a prominent part, but, on the contrary, remained for some time quite in the background, and eventually did not fly with the rest of the rebel chiefs, but gave himself up...the day after our troops took possession.[13]

The act is that there was not a shred of evidence suggesting that Jalal Uddin had been a rebel. He was executed solely because Shakespear wanted the death penalty. Captain Drummond wrote that he was

shaken by the execution of Jullaloodeen Khan. By natives I was always led to suppose that he was blameless, yet he was condemned by a Court Martial with Mr Shakespear as prosecutor. That Jullaloodeen himself expected to escape...is I think proved by his not having fled with his brother the Nawab and by his not having offered the least resistance when captured by a small party...a few miles from Nujeebabad.[14]

Following the execution, an anonymous letter dated 22 July 1858 appeared in the *Friend of India*. The author, who was in fact Major Robertson, said he was writing so that Mahmud Khan might have a chance of escaping the fate of his brother. Roberton insisted that Mahmud Khan was in the early stages not a rebel at all and that after the British withdrawal he had been instrumental in saving the lives of European fugitives. When captured, Robertson said, he must be shown mercy.[15] Shakespear wasted no time in replying. On 29 July be wrote

> To the general argument of the letter no one, I should think, could make any fair objection. That the Nawab behaved far better than many others there cannot be a doubt, but why the writer should suppose that, when caught, he would not have a fair trial, it is difficult to say.[16]

The only concession made by Shakespear in this letter was the admission that two elephants had been given to his party by Mahmud Khan to help him on his way to Roorki. But that Mahmud Khan was not a rebel from the start was categorically denied for

> among the first things he did was to...despatch a confidential servant to Delhi, *the original of which document is now in my possession*...[italics mine] I beg you will distinctly understand that I do not write this for publication, but being the person best acquainted with facts you will probably not be sorry to receive these few lines from me.[17]

Shakespear was quite obviously worried by the anonymous contributor to the *Friend of India*. Several days later he wrote to the Commissioner repeating that although he placed 'no confidence' in Mahmud Khan, he

> was constrained to make over the district to him on the 8 of June, 1857. ... Muhmood Khan gave himself up heartily to the delusion that the old Rohilla power was to be restored, and when he was urged, after our departure, not to commit himself too soon, but keep up appearance until it was certain which side would win he...ridiculed the necessity for any such moderation and proceeded to commit those overt acts of rebellion which I have noted in my narrative. ... As

some expression of opinion may be expected from me as to the mode in which Mahmud Khan ought to be treated, should he be taken alive, I beg to state that looking to all the circumstances of the case... I have no hesitation in declaring that in my estimation nothing short of a sentence of death can sufficiently meet the requirements of this case.[18]

Shakespear had every reason to be worried. First of all, as has been shown, he repeatedly stated that when he left Bijnor on 8 June he knew that Mahmud Khan would join the rebels. But after leaving Bijnor, he stayed at the house of Captain Drummond in Roorki and there confided to Drummond that Mahmud Khan could be trusted absolutely, insisting that it was inconceivable that he would join or aid the rebels in any way. Shakespear told Drummond that the man who would emerge as the real villain was the Nawab of Rampur.[19]

Shakespear's second point was that Mahmud Khan provided inadequate assistance to British fugitives, especially to himself. To this charge Colonel Baird Smith wrote

> Not a single drop of European blood was shed in it [Bijnor] except in open fight. The whole civil establishment were allowed to escape without let or hindrance.... What Mahmood Khan *might* have done is not the question, but what he actually *did*, and to class him with so monstrous and truculent a villain as Khan Bahadoor Khan seems to me, I confess, preposterous.... Let him have the benefit of acts that are honourable to humanity when done in his name as he would have been held responsible for others of an opposite character done in like manner. I have never seen the man in my life and he gave me no little trouble, but still I would very seriously regret to find that his capture by us was followed by an ignominious death, as I do not think he deserves such an end.[20]

Major Robertson, who started the controversy with his *Friend of India* letter in July 1858 had himself been a fugitive in Bijnor and wrote with conviction of Mahmud Khan's actions. He told Muir the Nawab had exercised his authority to the absolute limit for the protection of Europeans, adding that 'I never even heard his name until after the commencement of the Mutiny but I was shocked to hear that the life of a man was in danger to whose forbearance I myself and several of my countrymen were indebted for their lives'.[21]

It remains only to discuss the letter allegedly written by Mahmud Khan to the Emperor which Shakespear claimed to have had in his possession. It seems certain that no such letter existed. No one, except Shakespear,

connected with the proceedings against Mahmud Khan ever saw it and when Shakespear was called upon to produce it, it had mysteriously disappeared. Shakespear claimed that he gave the letter to Palmer, the Deputy Collector of Bijnor, and that Palmer lost it. For this, Palmer was roundly denounced. George Couper, the Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces, wrote: 'His Honor the Lieutenant Governor considers Mr Palmer greatly to blame for his inexcusable carelessness regarding the custody of these important documents.'[22] Palmer, however, continued to insist that Shakespear had not given him the letter and that he had, in fact, never even seen it. His persistent self-defence finally began to embarrass the Government and Couper ended the discussion by writing to the Commissioner: 'You are requested to inform Mr Palmer that this correspondence must here cease.'[23]

There can be little doubt that Shakespear, when he left Bijnor, completely trusted Mahmud Khan. Later, when Mahmud Khan did join the rebels, Shakespear altered his story accordingly so that he would not appear to have originally misjudged the situation. Mahmud Khan was not a rebel in June 1857. Not until December did he make the decision definitely to join Khan Bahadur Khan. The Deputy Collector of Saharampur in a plea to Muir to spare the Nawab's life wrote:

> Rebellion... is in many circumstances no crime at all.... In a case for instance like the present [in Rohilkhand] when a Government is abandoned by its troops and de facto ceases to exist, what are the people to do? They cannot remain neutral and if individuals take part with the cover of their countrymen which appears sure to succeed instead of with the cause of aliens which appears desperate surely these men are neither to be severely blamed nor inexorably punished.[24]

This is a valid argument and could have served as a reasonable defence for a host of people but it does not apply to the case of the Nawab of Najibabad. Mahmud Khan joined the rebels long after the fall of Delhi when ultimate British victory appeared certain and the rebel cause was already hopeless.

Captain Maclagan reported:

> For a long time after the arrival at Roorkee on the 11 June of Mr Shakespear and his party no suspicions were entertained of the Nawab's faithfulness. Nothing in the information received at Roorkee...tended to raise or confirm the adverse opinion which it appears from Mr Shakespear's letter he had formed even when constrained to make over to the Nawab the charge of the Bijnore District.[25]

Maclagan said there was not even a hint of a change in attitude on the part of Mahmud Khan before the fall of Delhi and that he was not really committed to rebellion until January 1858.[26] Muir also learned that Drummond had received a letter from Mahmud Khan in September 1857 'in which he professed his loyalty to Government and his willingness to make over charge of the District whenever required to do so'.[27] Drummond further revealed that when Najibabad was reoccupied he found that all of Shakespear's and Palmer's personal possessions had been carefully and safely stored by Mahmud Khan.[28] This is hardly the action of a man who intends to rebel and who does not think that the British will return.

That Mahmud Khan was not a rebel in the early stages is confirmed by his own correspondence. In July 1857 he wrote to the Nawab of Rampur, Yusaf Ali Khan:

> You are well aware of the mischief brewing all around. This mischief has now taken a serious turn. The officers of the district made every effort to suppress the mischief but failed. Particularly in the district of Bijnor mischief on a large scale was going to shoot up.... So far as possible, I also made efforts, by your grace, to suppress the mischief, with a view to public welfare. The district officers decided, after consultations, that they were going to Roorkee and that matters related to the financial and administrative aspects of the district should be looked after by me.... Having no alternative I took over management of the district as suggested by them. It was due to your grace, being my elder, that the mischief was rooted out.... The persons who had taken to rebellion and did not refrain from their acts but continued to harass the public were tied to the mouth of guns and blown off. I have also collected 7 or 8 guns and have started making rounds in the district with the result that the mischief has totally subsided.[29]

This was apparently the first letter written by Mahmud Khan to the Nawab of Rampur since the outbreak of hostilities and Yusaf Ali Khan was obviously very pleased to receive it. He answered that he was delighted to learn that the district was under control and that Mahmud Khan could count on his complete support.[30] Encouraged by this, Mahmud Khan wrote:

> I have begun to feel greater strength in my heart and soul at your highness' readiness to supply me with...help.... This devotee is also ever ready with all his heart and soul, wealth, and an army of 5000 or 6000 cavalry and infantry under his command to present himself immediately at your order to face the rebels at the risk of my life.[31]

There were two underlying causes of Mahmud Khan's early attitude. First of all, he never believed that the rebellion of Khan Bahadur Khan could possibly succeed. Secondly, and the importance of this factor must not be underestimated, he had before him the example of the Nawab of Rampur. It was not only that he was physically separated by Rampur and Moradabad from the area held by Khan Bahadur Khan. It was not only that British power and influence were much more obvious in Bijnor, surrounded as it was by territory largely under British control, than they were in Bareilly. It was also that his family traditionally supported the family of the Nawab of Rampur. His great-grandfather, Najib-ud-daula, had been one of the earliest retainers of Ali Muhammad Khan, the founder of the Rohilla state and the great-great-grandfather of Yusaf Ali Khan. In 1857 he would naturally look to Rampur for inspiration. 'It is by the grace of God,' Mahmud Khan wrote, 'that...an occasion [of fighting alongside the Nawab of Rampur] has again come up after a hundred years.'[32] 'You are my master and patron.... There has been a practice from olden times that if anyone of the brotherhood or nationality falls into trouble, he seeks help from the leader of the nation and your family has ever since been the leader of the Afghans.'[33]

What then caused the reversal of behaviour in Mahmud Khan? The Commissioner of Rohilkhand told Muir in October 1857 that he had received a letter from the 'Bijnore Nawab' saying that the administration of the district was proving very difficult but that he hoped to 'make over the district in peace, and with satisfaction to the Government'.[34] But Alexander believed that Mahmud Khan's loyalty had been inspired by the fall of Delhi and by the realization that the British were obviously on the road to victory.[35] In fact the reverse is true. The staunch supporter of the Nawab of Rampur and of the British in the summer of 1857 when the outlook was not at all encouraging became a follower of Khan Bahadur Khan at the end of 1857 when the military situation was reversed and the rebel cause appeared completely hopeless.

To understand this seemingly peculiar behaviour, it must be remembered that the Pathans and Rajputs of Rohilkhand were natural enemies. It was not the usual state of affairs for them to co-exist as equals in harmony. Rohilkhand, until the Pathans under Ali Muhammad Khan in the early eighteenth century took control of the province, was a Rajput area and the mutual antagonism remained intense. To Mahmud Khan the administration of his ancestral territory during the British absence

involved not only the suppression of rebellion but the reassertion of Pathan authority over the Hindu population. It also involved the renewing of an old and bloody conflict with the Kashipur Raja, Sheoraj Singh, a descendant of the Rajas of Kumaon with whom the Pathans had fought bitterly in the eighteenth century.

Sheoraj Singh was in no position to assume openly anything other than a pro-British stance. He was subordinate to and dependent on the Nawab of Rampur and could easily have been removed had he incurred the Nawab's displeasure. Moreover, Government officials such as the Commissioner were always close at hand in the hills. His position, at the same time, as a descendant of the Kumaon Rajas made him a natural rallying point for the anti-Mahmud Khan Rajput element in Bijnor.[36] Therefore, upon the restoration of British authority, Sheoraj Singh could submit to the Nawab of Rampur a somewhat immodest list of 'services rendered'[37] in the cause of the Raj including the giving of 'shelter and protection' to all those routed in battle by Mahmud Khan and fleeing 'from the oppression of the evil-mongers'.[38] Yet while circumstances, prohibited the adoption of an overtly anti-British position by Sheoraj Singh, his less-conspicuous activities seem to have moved in an opposite and thoroughly compromising direction. The Kashipur Raja not only corresponded with the rebels, he also claimed in this correspondence to be a true supporter of the rebel leader Khan Bahadur Khan and requested 'a Sunnud conferring on him the kingdom of the Hill country after the conquest of Nyni Tal'.[39] Clearly a policy of duplicity was the focal point around which Sheoraj Singh's activities revolved for he was determined to leave little to chance. Whichever the winning side, he would claim it as his own.

In Bijnor itself the political preferences of the Rajputs were of little concern to Mahmud Khan. The district was the scene of a bloody civil war between Pathan and Rajput, a war in which the combatants did not consider the central issue to be the future of the British Empire.[40] But while the future of the Raj was not of primary concern to Mahmud Khan, this was hardly true of the British officers. After Mahmud Khan engaged and defeated the Hindu body of Bijnor, which claimed to be friendly to the British cause, he was classified as a dangerous rebel.

The Nawab of Najibabad was despondent when he learned of his notoriety in the British camp. Cracroft Wilson, a Commissioner on Special Duty, who had earlier predicted a Rajput victory[41] was now literally crying for blood. 'I hope,' he said, 'by the grace of God, that blood shall be

retaliated not only from the blood of that rebel but from his family as well.'[42] Robert Alexander, on the other hand, did not actually accuse Mahmud Khan of rebellion but merely stated that upon the British return a thorough investigation of his conduct would have to be made. To Mahmud Khan, however, even the careful response of Alexander sounded very much like a sentence of death for any investigation of his conduct would involve soliciting the opinions of his traditional enemies whom he had just defeated. 'From the contents of the letter of the Commissioner', he told the Nawab of Rampur, Yusaf Ali Khan

> I have lost all hope. In fact I feel hopeless and dejected as it is quite evident from the wording of the letter that on his arrival a thorough enquiry shall be made. From this I gather that the Hindus and others who are the mischief-mongers of this district have, behind my back, raised a huge tumult of complaints before the officers and it is due to this reason that the said officer has written such meaningless words in reply.... You yourself know the facts and I...therefore pray that you may be pleased to give your opinion in the present circumstances.[43]

The Nawab of Rampur tried to pacify and encourage Mahmud Khan. He wrote that

> The letter of the Commissioner should be seen in a particular light because the facts about the rebellion have become engraved on the hearts of the officers and this cannot be wiped off without an enquiry to sort out the friend from the foe. It is still a matter of gratitude that there are hopes of an enquiry. In other cases there is no scope for enquiry. Under these circumstances, in my opinion, the only commendable course is that anything which might go against the pleasure of the officials should not come into being on your behalf.[44]

At the same time Yusaf Ali Khan forwarded to Bijnor a letter from Williams, the Commissioner of Meerut. Williams said it was inconceivable that Mahmud Khan should be considered a well wisher of the Government after his treatment of the loyal Hindus. 'There seems to be a vast gulf between his words and deeds. What else can I add.'[45]

This was the final straw for the Nawab of Najibabad. Convinced that he had already been convicted of rebellion, the only possible defence lay in joining the rebels. The label, the classification as rebel, now became the major determining factor in all his actions. Relations with Rampur were ruptured and he was welcomed with open arms by Khan Bahadur Khan. In January 1858 the raids on British positions across the Ganges became frequent.

The Nawab of Rampur took no military action against Mahmud Khan although Khan Bahadur Khan clearly feared that he might. 'I not making a request', Khan Bahadur Khan wrote,

> that you should sever your connections with the Britishers, which you might have entered into by way of some policy, but it appeals neither to reason nor to justice and fair play that you should out of sympathy for them come out to face the Muslims, especially against Nawab Mahmud Khan Bahadur who always regarded you as his senior and benefactor.[46]

The former benefactor arrested Mahmud Khan in Rampur in March 1860 and sent him to Moradabad. While it was almost unanimously agreed that Raja Sheoraj Singh should be rewarded for his loyalty, the special Commission improvised for the trial of Mahmud Khan would have had the Nawab executed[47] had not the Governor-General, upon a recommendation of William Muir, dictated that he would 'not entertain the suggestion of punishment by death'.[48] Mahmud Khan was sentenced to transportation for life and was dead within a matter months.

NOTES

1. R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1963, p. 185.

2. The Nawab's sentence was later commuted. He was sent to Aden and there left to his own devices.

3. Tafazzul Husain Khan, the Nawab of Farrukhabad, to Yusaf Ali Khan, the Nawab of Rampur, 9 October 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 165, Serial No. 2, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad. The dates of all documents translated from the Persian have been converted according to W. Haig, *Comparative Tables of Muhammedan and Christian Dates*, London: Luzac, 1932.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. This, of course, applies only in the earlier stages of the rebellion when it was a great deal less than certain that the British would be returning.

7. See S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1957, pp. 350ff.

8. A. Shakespear to R. Meyander, n.d., *Narrative of Events Attending the Outbreak of Disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Bijnour in 1857–54*, pp. 509–10.

9. Ibid. pp. 511–12.

10. W. Muir to R. Alexander, 7 July 1858, Commissioner's Office Rohilkhand, Dept XXIV, File 1/46. State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

11. A. Shakespear to R. Alexander, 4 August 1858, Commissioner's Office Rohilkhand, Dept IVA, File 2/73, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

12. Ibid.

13. A. Shakespear to R. Alexander, 9 June 1858, ibid.

14. Memorandum of Captain Drummond, 21 September 1858, Commissioner's Office Rohilkhand, Dept IVA, File 2/73, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

15. Major Robertson to the Editor of the *Friend of India*, 22 July 1858, ibid.

16. A. Shakespear to the Editor of the *Friend of India*, 29 July 1858, ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. A. Shakespear to R. Alexander, 4 August 1858, ibid. The number of elephants provided by Mahmud Khan for Shakespear's departure was, in this letter, reduced to one.

19. Memorandum of Captain Drummond, 21 September 1858, ibid.

20. Memorandum of Colonel Baird Smith, 11 August 1858, ibid.

21. Major Robertson to W. Muir, New Delhi, Commissioner's Office Rohilkhand. Dept IVA, File 2/73, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

22. George Couper to W. Roberts, Officiating Commissioner of Rohilkhand, 1 May 1861, ibid.

23. George Couper to John Inglis, 6 August 1852, ibid.

24. R. Robertson to W. Muir, New Delhi, ibid.

25. Captain Macagan to W. Muir, 24 September 1858, ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Memorandum of Captain Drummond, 21 September 1858, ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Mahmud Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 2 July 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 156, Serial No. 1, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

30. Yusaf Ali Khan to Mahmud Khan, 10 July 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 156, Serial No. 2, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

31. Mahmud Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 2 August 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 158, Serial No. 2, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

32. Ibid.

33. Mahmud Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 8 August 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 159, Serial No. 8, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

34. R. Alexander to W. Muir, 6 October 1857, quoted in W. Muir to J. W. Sherer, 20 October 1857, W. Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India during the Mutiny of 1857*, ed. W. Coldstream, Vol. I, Edinburgh: Clark, 1902, p. 213.

35. Ibid.

36. To Mahmud Khan this constituted 'harassing the public'. See Mahmud Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 2 July 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 156, Serial No. 1, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

37. See Sheoraj Singh to Yusaf Ali Khan, 23 August 1858, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 10, File No. 525, Serial No. 6, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

38. Ibid.

39. R. Alexander to W. Muir, 6 December 1858, Board of Revenue, Moradabad File 22, Acc. No. 548, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

40. See, for example, Mahmud Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 2 July 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 156, Serial No. 1, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

41. J. C. Wilson to C. Thornhill, 11 August 1857, *Records of the Intelligence Department....*, Vol. II, p. 303.

42. J. C. Wilson to Yusaf Ali Khan, 4 January 1858, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 171, Serial No. 2, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad. Wilson had been extremely agitated for some time over the fact that since the outbreak of hostilities his salary had not been paid. Robert Alexander had decided that it was neither necessary nor expedient 'to pay it at the present time, the less so as...Mr Wilson is an English gentleman who is as much aware of the honour and solvency of the British Government as of the peculiar nature of the present crisis and of the propriety of requiring private claims for the present at least to yield to public'. R. Alexander to Yusaf Ali Khan, 8 September 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 8, File No. 327, Serial No. 2. This did not satisfy Wilson. 'All the employees of the civil court of the district of Moradabad', he complained to the Nawab of Rampur, 'are regularly being paid their salaries by you and I think this is being done without the permission of the Commissioner Sahib. I compared my case with that of a Translator of the Civil Court and came to the conclusion that if a Translator, who has no work to do for the present, can get his salary, the judge must also get his salary, especially since the Translator has no work to do and the Judge has so much work to do that he can have no rest day and night.... It does not stand to reason that the Translator with no work should get his salary and the Judge who spends days and nights in strenuous labour for Government should be paid nothing. But it has now been revealed to me that this idea of mine is based on a misconception. I have come to remember a saying...: "Patience holds the key to the door of the Treasury."' J. C. Wilson to Yusaf Ali Khan, 22 September 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 8, File No. 327, Serial No. 3, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

43. Mahmud Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 19 December 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 170, Serial No. 4, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

44. Yusaf Ali Khan to Mahmud Khan, 23 December 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 170, Serial No. 5, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

45. F. Williams to Yusaf Ali Khan, 17 December 1857, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 4, File No. 170, Serial No. 6, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

46. Khan Bahadur Khan to Yusaf Ali Khan, 7 January 1858, Rampur Mutiny Records, Bundle No. 5, File No. 204, Serial No. 9, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

47. The Special Commission was headed by John Strachey whose antipathy towards Pathans is well documented in his work, *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892.

48. W. Muir to R. Alexander, 27 October 1858, Commissioner's Office Rohilkhand, Dept. IVA. File 2/73, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.

PART IV

Conspiracy versus Organized Movement

Muslim Revivalists and the Revolt of 1857*

K. M. Ashraf

If one reads through the official and British records of 1857 one gathers the vague impression that Muslim revivalist groups and the Wahabis[1] in particular had something to do with it. There are casual references to calls for *Jihad* (holy war) in almost all places, to *Fatwas* of Maulavis in big cities, to the display of the Green Flag in important rebel centres—all of which suggest a certain Muslim revivalist colouring to the events of 1857. It was even put on record at the trial of Bahadur Shah that the rebel leader General Bakht Khan was a Wahabi, and he had appointed a certain Sarfaraz Ali as the leader of the *jihadis* (religious warriors), and that Wahabi contingents joined the Delhi rebels from various places, including one from Tonk.[2]

All this gives, however, no comprehensive or clear picture of their role in or of their contribution to this revolt. In fact, it is never fully appreciated that the revivalist trend was the decisive factor in the political orientation of the Muslims, and the Wahabis were the only people who came not only armed with a consistent anti-British ideology but also with the backing of a network of organized centres spread all over northern India, with contacts in the south and moral influence on the Muslim intelligentsia throughout the country. In a sense, the Wahabi outlook on politics and religious life embodied the century-old hostility of the Muslim ruling classes to the growing encroachments of the British. [...]

Leadership of 1857 and the Wahabis

There have been vague speculations as to who were the leaders behind the great national movement of 1857 and some people naturally imagine

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that the uprising was probably planned by Bahadur Shah and Wajid Ali Shah, as representatives of the two distinguished royal families of northern India. It is even suggested that they *jointly* incited the Hindustani army and planned a general massacre of Europeans, to be followed by an attack of the other Indian ruling chiefs on the British army.[3] There is, however, very little evidence to support this contention. On the contrary, from materials available, it appears that Wajid Ali Shah or Bahadur Shah for that matter, played a very minor role even when they had a say in the affairs of the provisional government. From the letters discovered at the house of one Pir Ali in 1857 at Patna, one gathers that besides the Wahabis, two other groups were operating professedly on behalf to the rulers of Delhi and Lucknow respectively. But the evidence is by no means conclusive to prove that they were authorised by these dignitaries.[4] Among the members of the royal family of Delhi who can claim to have actively participated in and led the resistance movement, Prince Firoz Shah,[5] a grandson of the Moghul emperor Farrukh Siyar, depended for support on the Wahabi Pathan contingent of soldiers who had joined him after being discharged from the service of the Mahratta princes. In the case of the Begum of Oudh, the guiding spirit was, of course, the famous 'Maulavi of Fyzabad' who, from all accounts can legitimately claim to be 'the brain and the hand of the conspiracy.' It can be asserted with confidence that while Ahmadullah was not strictly Wahabi, in other words, belonging to the Sect of Ahl-Hadis or a traditionalist, he was certainly a revivalist like his Deccanese countryman, Sultan Tipu, and worked for the same ideals of political regeneration. In any case, he was working in closest cooperation with the group of Wahabis and the followers of Sayyad Ahmad Barelvi.[7]

The dominating figure of the revolt and the leader of the central government at Delhi, however, is Bakht Khan the Rohilla warrior from Sultanpur (Oudh). Bakht Khan possessed a rich experience of military training under the British and assumed the title of 'Lord Commander' when he superceded the decadent prince, Mirza Moghul, in the command of the patriotic forces in Delhi.[8] Bakht Khan was, from all accounts, a confirmed and fanatical Wahabi who arrived in Delhi with a band of Wahabi organisers and appointed his spiritual guide, Maulavi Sarfaraz Ali[9] as the 'Imam' of the contingent of 'religious warriors' (*Mujahids*) numbering several thousands.[10]

It is thanks to these Wahabi activists that the morale of the army was kept up to the last moment in spite of serious initial mistakes of strategy and the political backwardness of the royal family.[11] The Wahabi volunteers not only carried on the fight in difficult situations but occasionally snatched the initiative from the enemy even when patriotic resistance had broken down.[12] Some idea of the spirit of Wahabis may be gathered from the fact that every soldier in the camp of Bakht Khan had taken a pledge to fight the British to the last. When Delhi fell, Bakht Khan first tried to persuade Bahadur Shah to accompany him and lend his support in building a second front on a better strategic site, and when the king refused, he joined forces with Ahmadullah in the provisional government at Mohammadi and became the commander-in-chief and defence minister with Sarfaraz Ali as the 'Chief Qazi' and Nana, Sahib as diwan or prime minister. Finally when they had to give up Mohammadi, the last stronghold of the patriots, in face of the British attack and Ahmadullah was treacherously killed, Bakht Khan crossed over into Nepal with Nana Sahib and others.

The administration of Delhi under Bakht Khan and the Wahabis is well worth a study for its democratic policies. We have already noted that Bakht Khan abolished duty on such articles of common consumption as salt and sugar, penalized hoarding, and offered five *bighas* of rent-free land in perpetuity to the families of those soldiers who happened to die in one fight against the British. We have also mentioned the pledge of the patriotic army to fight to the last and their amazing morale even when the enemy had surrounded them on all sides.

The administration under Bakht Khan was based on the support of the common people, on the alliance of the soldiery (who were mainly outsiders), and the artisans and the workers from within the city.[13] Bakht Khan was himself an embodiment of the spirit of the revivalist movement. Simple in habits, he lived and moved about like a common soldier who could not be recognised on his first entry in Delhi, and was ridiculed both for his uncouth appearance and for his unsophisticated, even boorish manners. But he fought the British and out-generaled them for weeks together. He made sincere though unsuccessful attempts to see that the civilian population of Delhi was not inconvenienced because of the army, and strict discipline was observed under all circumstances. No wonder if the whole of the degenerate crowd of princely commanders, and aristocrats

who formed the advisory council of Bahadur Shah during the first few weeks of the provisional government, just faded away after the arrival of Bakht Khan and the formation of the soldier's committee with its democratic constitution and attempt at observance of rules.

Wahabis Outside Delhi

We have already noted that long before the outbreak of 1857, the leaders of the Wahabi movement had built up a network of their organization in all important centres in north India, with regional *khalifas* and trusted local agents. After the death of Sayyad Ahmad Barelvi in 1832 they also established contacts with Muslim centres of the Deccan like Hyderabad and Mysore, and with some of the States of Central India and Rajputana, for instance, Bhopal, Tonk, Jaipur, and others. Their influence in cantonments and in soldiers committees of the Hindustani army was already noticeable in 1840. In a word, one might say that by 1857 the Wahabis had developed a countrywide political organization and in the region of the Doab in particular, say from Delhi to Allahabad, every town of note had its organized and functioning group of Wahabis and other Muslim revivalists, all united in their intense hatred of the British and anxious to participate in a general uprising. This provided, in fact, the political and organizational base which helped Bakht Khan and other Wahabi leaders to capture the provisional government of Delhi.

The year 1857 opened with the distribution of *chappatis* all over the countryside, accompanied by inspired rumours of the impending overthrow of British rule, and some sort of consultations among the soldiers' committees.[14] This was soon followed by the 'cartridge incident' in Barrackpur and thereafter any one could see that some kind of general uprising was going to break out. In fact, tentative dates for such an uprising were announced to the people all over north India through popular whispering campaigns. Meanwhile, on the higher plane, leaders like Ahmadullah, who was in touch with various groups of Muslims and Nana Sahib, who represented the views of the Hindu aristocracy, contacted one another and mutually agreed on some plan of action which was popularized among the lower ranks by all kinds of local people—the Ulema, the tradesmen, the old landlords, even common sadhus, and itinerant faqirs. In any case, the Hindustani soldiers of Meerut and the gate-keepers of Delhi city both knew the tasks that were allotted to them for the 10th of May, 1857.[15]

Once the signal was given by the entry of Meerut Sowars and the proclamation of the provisional government in Delhi under Bahadur Shah, the network of Wahabi organizations immediately came into action all over northern India, particularly in predominantly Muslim areas. True to the convention, members of every revivalist group first chose their leader (*Amir*) for the holy war (Jihad) and bound themselves to him by an oath of fidelity (*b'eat*). Then unfurling the green flag of Islam, they took out a procession, calling for the enlistment of volunteers (Mujahids) and popularizing the Fatwa relating to Jihad. Meanwhile, the armoury was raided, the treasury was looted, and the prison gates were thrown open. In some cases, the revenue records were burnt, and the *Sahukars* were forced to write off debts.

This was followed by some sort of armed attack on the British barracks or on the local English officials, as the case may be, and the central government at Delhi was asked either to nominate one of their men as administrator for the area, failing which they delegated such powers to one of their own nominees, invariably to the leader of the local group. In any case, in the new administrative set-up of the area, the common people had a very big voice and if there was a regular unit of the army in the locality, the elected committee of the soldiers took charge of the affairs. [...]

NOTES

1. The term 'Wahabi' is certainly inaccurate inasmuch as the political objectives of the so-called Indian Wahabis and their social outlook in general, were derived, not from the doctrines of Abdul Wahab of Nejd (d. 1787), but from the earlier teachings of Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d. 1762). Some Muslim revivalists like Ubaidullah Sindhi (1861–1948), Ghulam Sarwar, and Ajmal Khan have therefore chosen to style themselves 'Waliullahis' or followers of Shah Waliullah. I have, however, retained the term because of its popular and historical associations.

2. *Trial of the Ex-King of Delhi*, I.R. Department.

3. Kanhayya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Baghawat-Hind*, Lucknow, 1916, (Urdu), p. 7.

4. Jata Shankar Jha, *The Patna Conspiracy of 1857*, Indian Historical Records Proceedings, 1956.

5. Few details are available about this valiant Moghul prince. He was a son of Mirza Nazim and a maternal grandson of Shah Alam. Sometime in 1856, that is, before outbreak of the revolt he had gone to Mecca on pilgrimage (*Haj*) and found to his great satisfaction on return that there was a countrywide revolt against the British. The 'rebel' soldiers from Indore and the Afghan Mujahids from Gwalior

and Dholpur joined him on the way and with this force he laid siege to Agra and then proceeded to Mewar. Delhi had probably fallen to the British when he was trying to contact the patriotic leaders in the capital. In any case, we find him proceeding to Lucknow *via* Farrukhabad and Shahjahanpur (which were the strongholds of the patriots), to join forces with Ahmadullah. He was invited and agreed to join the provisional government of Ahmadullah at Mohammadi. His movements thereafter are somewhat obscure. There is a legend that he crossed over to Russia (Kamaluddin Haider, *Tarikh-i Awadh*, Vol. II, Lucknow (1878), p. 468). Another version, which is more likely to be correct, traces him back to Mecca where we find him in the company of other distinguished Wahabi Ulema, for instance, Muhammed Ishaq, Haji Imadullah, and others, who had fled to Arabia after the collapse of the resistance movement. He is reported to have died in Arabia in 1895 (Intizamullah Shahabi, *Ghadar ke Chand Ulema*, Delhi, p. 135).

6. G.B. Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, London (1891), pp. 17–18.

7. (Maulavi) Ahmadullah is a meteoric figure in the 1857 movement. He is a not even a northerner and hails from Madras, claiming descent from the Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golconda. What is really significant is the fact that his father is reported to have been a courtier of Tipu. In any case, he was probably educated in Hyderabad and then in London, and returned to India after a visit to Iran and Arabia. His itinerary in India on return is a very long and interesting one. We find him visiting Sambhar, Jaipur, Tonk, in Rajputana, then Gwalior (presumably to visit his Pir, Mahrab Shah who was important enough to be mentioned on the coins of the Mohammadi government), Delhi, and Agra, before settling down in Fyzabad. He was essentially a revivalist in his outlook and while in Delhi, he was in contact with persons like Sadruddin, the *Mufti*, and Fazle Haq, the *Sadr* of Delhi. In Fyzabad, he was arrested by the British for his seditious activities and was actually waiting to be hanged when the rebellion broke out in Lucknow. Henceforth the story of the resistance movement in Lucknow, is the record of his perseverance, courage, resourcefulness, and of his military talents displayed in battles against the trained generals of the British army. When Delhi, Kanpur, and Allahabad fell to the British, Lucknow kept the standard of national resistance flying, and when it was no more possible to defend it, Ahmadullah and the patriotic leaders from other centres fought in Shahjahanpur and finally entrenched themselves in Mohammadi with Ahmadullah as king and head of the new government. He now assumed the title of 'Defender of the Faith of Muhammad' (*Hami-i-Din-i Muhammad*) in true revivalist style and struck his coins in the name of Mahrab Shah, his spiritual preceptor. Before long, however, he was treacherously murdered on 15 June 1858 (Intizamullah Shahabi, *East India Company Aur Baghi Ulema*, Delhi, (Urdu), pp. 48–9).

8. Little is known about the early life of Bakht Khan who was a Rohilla and claimed to be related to the royal family of Oudh through his mother. He is reported to have served the British army as an ordinary Resaldar in the Afghan war, then promoted to the rank of an artillery officer and finally as Subedar at Neemuch. After the outbreak of 1857 we find him in Bareilly for a while helping Nawab Bahadur Khan (the Rohilla leader of provisional government in Bareilly) in driving the British out of Rohilkhand. From Bareilly he went to assist Nana Sahib in recruiting soldiers from Badaun and Farrukhabad. Finally he started for Delhi with 14,000 troops, and three regiments of cavalry, a park of artillery, and a few lakhs of rupees in cash, appropriated from the Bareilly treasury (Kamaluddin Haider, *Tarikh-i-Awadh* (Urdu), Vol. II, Lucknow, 1978).

9. Maulavi Sarfaraz Ali was a disciple of Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, the famous Khalifa of Sayyad Ahmad Barelvi and a leading figure in the Wahabi movement (Kamaluddin, *Tarikh-i-Awadh*, p. 445).

10. Among Wahabi volunteers who came to Delhi, those from Jaipur, Jhansi, Hissar, Bhopal including 6,000 from Nasirabad are specially mentioned. The Wahabi centre on the Frontier offered to send 1,400 volunteers under the Akhund, the ruler of Swat who was known to be a patron and supporter of the Wahabis. Tonk sent a contingent of 600 with the promise of a further batch of 2,000. Two hundred men arrived from Najibabad, the old Rohilla centre (now in Bijnor district in Uttar Pradesh) (Amir Ahmad Alavi, *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, (Urdu) Lucknow, 1955, p. 242; see also Hasan Nizami, *Ghadar ki Subh-o Sham*, Delhi, 1829, for details).

11. When Delhi fell and Bahadur Shah was in panic, Bakht Khan explained to him the reason for the failure, that is, the initial mistake they had committed in choosing to fight with the city of Delhi as the base and the heights of the Ridge in the hands of the enemy. He also related how Prince Mirza Moghal, who was an amateur and a fool took up the command and made a mess of everything. (Amir Ahmed Alavi, *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, pp. 138–9).

12. When on 14 September 1857 British troops succeeded in forcing their way into Delhi, the Wahabls mobilized the Muslims in the Jama Masjid area and in their initial attack, they drove out the advancing British columns, inflicting on them more than 400 casualties (see Hasan Nizami, *Ghadar ki Subh-o Sham*, for details). Eventually, when the Jama Masjid area was occupied by the enemy there was nothing to see but piles of corpses for over a furlong right up to Kotwali (Zahir Dehlavi, *Dastan-i Ghadar*, (Urdu) Lahore, pp. 113–14). This explains why the Jama Masjid was not restored to the Muslims for a long time and the British authorities were planning to demolish this mosque as they had destroyed several others. Most of the houses of Muslims, however, in this area were destroyed (see Ghalib's Urdu letters in, Mirza Asadullah Khan ed.,

Kulliyat-i Ghalib, Lucknow, 1284 AH; *Ud-i Hind*, Aligarh, 1827; *Urdu-i Mualla*, Lahore, 1922, for details).

13. Ghalib, *Kulliyat-i Ghalib*, p. 192.

14. Malleson is of the opinion that the plan of chappatis was designed by Ahmadullah (Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny*). Numerous *Bhavisyavanis* (or auguries of future events) were then in circulation and Zakaullah, has quoted one in Persian verse which was probably meant to influence the Muslim intelligentsia (Zakaullah, *Tarikh-i 'Uruj-i Inglishia Hind*, Delhi, 1904).

15. Ghalib, *Kulliyat-i Ghalib*.

The Gwalior Contingent in 1857–58*
A Study of the Organization and Ideology of the Sepoy Rebels

Iqtidar Alam Khan

Dilating on Disraeli's view (put forward in his speech in the House of Commons on 27 July 1857) that the violent events triggered all over north India by the sepoy mutiny at Meerut were nothing short of a national revolt. Marx had suggested in his article published in the *New York Daily Tribune* of 14 August 1857 that the rebelling sepoys were in reality acting as the 'instruments' of Indian people's upsurge against the British colonial rule.[1] According to him, by creating the 2,00,000 strong native army British rule had brought into existence 'the first general centre of[2] resistance which the Indian people ever possessed. In 1857, it was this centre comprising the peasants and artisans in uniform that was apparently seeking to act, with all its ideological and organizational failures, as the vanguard of the spontaneous people's uprising.

Marx's own subsequent information as well as the detailed researches of the later writers have fully upheld the early insights into the character of the 1857 Revolt: That all the sections of the native army, including some of the exclusively Sikh corps were affected by the rebellious sentiments,[3] that in many places the sepoy revolts were followed by stirring into action of the artisans and other poor sections of the urban populace,[4] that in the northern subdivisions of the Muzaffarnagar districts the rival *khaps* of the Jats peasantry had come together for defying the English authority under the leadership of a Mewati Muslim, that the Jat peasantry of the same Muzaffarnagar district had also aligned itself with 'the petty Muslim gentry elements' then fighting last ditch battles against the advancing English troops,[5] that the *zamindars* and other

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landowning groups in Awadh as well as in other parts of the then North-Western Provinces and central India, at least initially, not only looked with approval on the rebellious acts of the sepoys, but, in many cases actually participated in the rebellion,[6] that the so-called *Wahabis* armed with a consistent anti-British ideology and a network of organized centres spread all over northern India, were in the forefront of the struggle in all the main centres of the Revolt;[7] are now well known and almost universally recognized general features of 1857 rebellion that testify to its character as a national or people's uprising spearheaded by the sepoys. But within this broad framework of a national or people's revolt there remain unanswered many an important question.[8] Some of them relate to the roles of diverse social interests and ideological influences discernible, among the rebels, or have a bearing to the military and organizational failures of the rebels.[9] For example, it still remains to be investigated fully as to whether the sepoy rebels of 1857 were really always as devoid of any organizational cohesion and discipline, or were as incapable of clearly defining their long and short term military as well as political aims, or were as hopelessly lacking in efficient planning. This has been primarily at gaining a better perspective on the motivations of smaller groups among the rebels as well as on the symbols of political legitimacy that they had a tendency to rally round.

I

The Gwalior contingent, which was at the centre of the revolt in the Gwalior territory, was created in 1844 after the disbanding of a major part of Scindia's army. This arrangement was made under the provisions of a treaty imposed upon Scindia by the East India Company's government following the defeat of Gwalior army near Dholpur.[10] Originally the Gwalior contingent consisted of a regiment of 400 cavalry and 200 Marhatta horse, 52 *gulundaze*, 2 nine pn., guns and 2 twenty four pn., howitzer and a regiment of infantry of 600 men. At the time of its creation the contingent was commanded by a brigadier and six other English officers, 2 of cavalry, 3 of infantry, and 1 of artillery.[11] In addition to these seven English officers, a number of 'native' commissioned as well as non-commissioned officers were recruited into the contingent from the regular corps of the Bengal Army.[12] A distinctive feature of the Gwalior contingent was the high rates of salaries paid to its sepoys. These rates—

301 Chanderi rupees per month to a cavalryman and 7 Chanderi rupees per month to an infantryman—were perhaps higher than those of Bengal Army and were conceived as a means to give 'the officer a strong hold' over the troops.[13]

The expenses on the maintenance of the contingent were to be met by Scindia but its command and management was entirely in the hands of the English officers headed by a brigadier. The latter, took his orders from the commander-in-chief and ran the day to day affairs of the contingent in consultation with the political agent residing at Gwalior.[14] Scindia had ceded to the British several 'districts' including those of Chanderi, Kachwahagarh, Shander, and Orai the revenues of which were to be used for the maintenance of the contingent.[15] From 1844 onwards, it was the undeclared policy of the East India Company's government not to allow Scindia to increase the number of troops, particularly, of infantry. Throughout this period, as and when it was felt necessary to have a 'larger force of infantry' for maintaining order, in Gwalior, the strength of the contingent was increased. And, simultaneously, more revenues were sought to be taken away from Scindia's charge for the maintenance of these additional troops.[16] It would appear that between 1844 and 1857, the strength of the contingent was steadily increasing. By 1857, the size of cavalry and infantry had grown from 600 each to 1,158 and 6,412 respectively. Similarly, there was a sharp accretion in the contingent's fire power with the rise in number of its gunners from 52 to 74 and that of guns from 4 to 26.[17] With this increase in the strength of the contingent, the number of its commissioned as well as non-commissioned officers had also grown. This should also apply to the number of Englishmen serving as the officers of the different corps of the contingent.[18]

As it steadily expanded during 1844–57, the Gwalior contingent appears to have gained, by and large, the same composition, in terms of caste, regional, and religious groups present, as that of the Bengal Army.[19] From the random mention in records of Muslim names or reference to some of the sepoys or to the sepoys joining a body of *ghazis* on the eve of the rebellion, or to the sepoys swearing in 1857 'on the Ganges water and Koran to stand by each other' go to indicate that a sizeable section of sepoys and officers of the contingent were Muslims. They were perhaps present in the cavalry in much larger strength. The infantry and artillery, on the other hand, were apparently, predominantly manned by the *poorbeahs*, who were mainly Brahmins and Thakurs recruited from the

eastern parts of Awadh and the adjoining districts of Bihar.[20] The presence of considerable number of horsemen belonging to the caste *Kychee* in the contingent's cavalry[21] was, however, another important point about its composition that deserves to be noted. It goes on to show that unlike the Bengal Army, men in the Gwalior contingent were not exclusively high caste people. At least some of them in the cavalry were known to have belonged to a lower caste (of the Kychees).

In addition to the Gwalior contingent, there were present in the Gwalior territory in 1857 three other bodies of troops each one of which also participated in the Revolt to a limited extent. These bodies were (a) Scindia's regular troops, (b) troops attached to Baiza Bai, the widow of Daulat Rao Scindia, and (c) the irregular troops maintained by the chiefs, mostly Rajputs, subjugated by Scindia. Scindia's regular troops were limited by the Treaty of 1843 to 3000 infantry, 6000 cavalry (including body-guards of *paigah*), and 2000 some kind of policemen. A large number of officers commanding these troops were Scindia's Marhatta *sardars*. Apparently in Scindia's cavalry there were present a large number of Muslim horsemen recruited from British territories possibly from Rohilkhand. This is suggested by a reference in Macpherson's Report (of 10 February 1858) to the presence of '800 of Scindia's Mahomedan Horse from our provinces' among the rebel sepoys who proceeded from Gwalior to Agra in September 1857. In the same group, Macpherson also notes the presence of 'several hundred Wilayatees in the service of Baiza Bai which would indicate that on the eve of the Revolt a large body of horsemen was attached to Baiza Bai also. Perhaps these troops had come with her from her earlier stations Satara, Nasik, and Ujain where she was staying before this time virtually as fugitive from Gwalior.[22] The *Wilayatis* as is well known, were the Afghan mercenaries recruited from different places in north western India and were famous for being fiercely loyal to their employers. Lastly so far as irregular troops commanded by the chiefs paying allegiance to Scindia were concerned, their total strength is estimated to be around 17,540 men.[23] As may be imagined these irregular troops were dispersed all over Gwalior territory. The role of this otherwise large body of troops was also restricted by their parochial outlook and lack of proper organization. They were fit only for serving as watchmen or for escorting parties.

At the time of the outbreak of sepoy revolts at Meerut and Delhi in the second week of May 1857, the Gwalior contingent, and to a slightly

lesser extent Scindia's troops as well, shared the general discontent and resentment of the sepoys and the native officers of the Bengal Army.[24] This discontent, fanned by superficial issues like greased cartridges and others seem to have stemmed basically from the growing economic distress and pauperization of the peasant and urban masses from amongst whom the sepoys of both the Bengal Army as well as the Gwalior contingent were recruited. Moreover, the Muslim sepoys and officers of the contingent as also the Rohillas and Wilayatis among Scindia's and Baiza Bai's troops appear to have been widely influenced by the revivalist appeal of the Wahabi doctrines prescribing an anti-British *jihad* under the leadership of an *imam*.[25] The phenomenon of many of the sepoys opting, after the contingent's revolt on 14 June 1857, to join the freely roaming ghazi bands, goes to testify the impact of Wahabi propaganda on the minds of the Muslim troops at Gwalior. Surviving evidence does suggest the possibility of some kind of centre preaching jihad being present at Gwalior for a number of years before this time.[26]

In May 1857, the contingent was headed by brigadier Ramsay who, with the help of sixteen or more English officers, was administering its affairs quite efficiently.[27] Before the news of the revolts at Meerut and Delhi reached Gwalior, the sepoys of the contingent were apparently, quite contented and on best of terms with their English officers as well. Around this time, while the main body of the contingent was at Gwalior, a number of its infantry regiments were stationed at Neemuch (7th Regiment), Seepree (3rd Regiment), Agra (5th Regiment), Sultanpur (6th Regiment), Burhanpur (a company of 6th Regiment), Jabalpur (another company of 6th Regiment), and other stations. From this pattern of the deployment of the contingent's regiments one gets the impression that, in addition to being an effective instrument for maintaining order inside the Gwalior territory, by then, it had also come to be used for bolstering the British authority in a large part of central India. In the given situation, therefore, a revolt at Gwalior could have created a very difficult situation for the already endangered military position of the East India Company's government in the North Western Province and central India.[28]

It speaks of the efficient management of the affairs of the contingent by brigadier Ramsay and also of fairly close ties existing till then, between the sepoys in general and their English officers, that despite the growing signs of general discontent against the colonial regime and the presence of Wahabi elements among the sepoys, there was no flare up at Gwalior

throughout May and the first half of June. As late as 23 May, Lieutenant Colonel H. M. Durand, the officiating agent of the governor general in central India went out of his way to state in one of his despatches that 'the conduct of the contingent troops has hitherto been so exemplary.[29] The British authorities were so confident of the loyalty of the contingent at that time that soon after getting the news of outbreaks at Meerut and Delhi, Macpherson had mooted the idea of sending it to Agra for reinforcing the English troops there. This proposal was however, dropped owing to Scindia's opposition on the grounds that the contingent's moving away from Gwalior would encourage the local chiefs to rebel against him. However, on 13, 17, and 19 May small detachments of troops mainly those of the contingent's cavalry were sent for reinforcing Agra. This movement of troops which commenced after the news of revolt at Delhi had already reached Gwalior, was not opposed by any section of the sepoys or their native officers. Then again on 20 May, on Lt. Governor's request, troops belonging to the contingent's infantry and one hundred sawars of Sind bodyguard marched to Etawa under major Hannessy who was able to restore the district magistrate's authority in that place.[30]

Partly, at least, this 'exemplary' behaviour of the contingent, for about two weeks after the news of outbreak of Rebellion reached Gwalior, was prompted by the deliberate impression that was sought to be given to its sepoys and native officers by Scindia that if they would refrain from joining the Revolt, henceforth, their position would be at par with those in his direct employment. Major Macpherson himself indirectly contributed to strengthening this impression by depositing with Scindia, around this time, rupees 4 1/2 lacs meant for meeting the expenses of the contingent which were collected from the ceded district of Orai. It was a continuation of the same posture on Scindia's part that, after the outbreak at Jhansi (7 June) he took over the administration of the ceded district of Kuchwagarh and 'which were assigned for the expenses of the contingent'. This posture of Scindia, which he seemingly adopted with the full approval of major Macpherson, gave to the men of the contingent, particularly to those who either from doctrinal considerations, or on account of their feelings of solidarity with the rebelling sepoys of Meerut and others, were averse to be counted on the side of the British, the psychological satisfaction of no longer being in the service of the British military authorities without actually resorting to rebellion.

In this context, it is worth remembering that down to the end of May, neither the main body of the contingent at Gwalior nor any one of regiments deputed to different neighbouring stations, with the sole exception of the 1st cavalry sent to Agra on 13 May, acted in an overtly rebellious manner. The 1st cavalry was induced to revolt at Agra only under the influence of the rebellious elements of the Bengal Army indicated that it had revolted rather half heartedly and also that it had acted in this manner without obtaining the agreement of the other units of the contingent. This is borne out by the following details gleaned from Macpherson's brief notice of this episode in his report.

On 19 May, the troops of 1st cavalry, the company of a wing of 9th native infantry, marched to Aligarh and captured the treasury there. Their moving to Aligarh suggested that, perhaps, they had planned to proceed to Delhi via Aligarh. But on reaching Aligarh and after having seized the treasury they seem to have changed their mind. From Aligarh they retired to Hathras where they tried to restore order by acting against a body of rebels who were plundering the place. Macpherson refers to their conduct at Hathras approvingly ('behaved well' is the expression used by him). But on 23 May, a hundred men separated themselves from this group, and proceeded to Delhi—'shouting *deen*'. Our records do not tell us what happened to the majority of the 1st cavalry of the contingent who had stayed back at Hathras on 23 May. These men were, apparently, having second thoughts on the advisability of their taking an active part in the rebellion. It was possibly this indecisiveness of the majority which led to a rift between them and a militant minority. The latter were, perhaps, not prepared for any slide back from their earlier resolve to join the rebel forces at Delhi. When they felt that the majority was deliberately stalling their march to Delhi they decided to part company with them. It is possible that this sudden change in the attitude of the majority was dictated by the advice that they might have received from the emerging leaders of he contingent at Gwalior. These leaders were, perhaps in favour of stalling a decision on the question of their active participation in the fast spreading rebellion. They were, apparently, hopeful of eventually shaking off the authority of the English officers by simply persuading Scindia to take the management of the contingent into his own hands.

There does exist an interesting piece of evidence pointing to the emergence, as early as 16 May, of a leadership within the contingent who

presumed to hold negotiations with brigader Ramsay as well as Scindia on behalf of the sepoys and the native officers. A communication of the political agent at Gwalior to the governor-general dated 16 May 1857, records Sind directive to the contingent that it should move towards Chanderi for suppressing the chiefs of Chanderi, Rayaghur, Muadhungur, Komru, and Bhadoara who had come out against his administration. Apparently this direction had the full approval of brigadier Ramsay. But the sepoys were not prepared to comply with this directive. They excused themselves from immediately marching out to Chanderi. While not spelling out any reasons for their reluctance, they vaguely promised to proceed against the rebellious *rajas* 'after the rainy weather' which was nothing but a pretext, a ploy to cover up their unconcealed defiance.[31]

This evidence is of vital importance on a number of counts. Firstly, it shows that already by 16 May 1857, there existed, within the contingent a set of leaders who were capable of acting as the spokesmen of the entire body of the sepoys. These leaders, apparently, had come to the forefront in the course of prolonged discussion at the meetings of the sepoys that were going on, according to Macpherson, 'more or less since the commencement of insurrection,'[32] It also indicates that, immediately after the outbreak of rebellions at Meerut and Delhi, the sepoys and the native officers of the contingent in their collective wisdom, had come to resolve on not allowing a large scale removal of their regiments from Gwalior. They agreed to the sending of small bodies of horsemen to Agra on 17 and 19 May, and another small detachment of infantry to Etawah on 20 May as this did not amount to large scale dispersal. But the moving away of the entire contingent towards Chanderi was something which they could not but oppose. Brigadier Ramsay as well as, Scindia were obliged to condone this development to the point of even entering into negotiations with the leaders of the sepoys. They eventually had to overlook the sepoys' polite refusal to comply with their directive. In the rapidly changing situation all over north India during the third week of May 1857, the leaders of the sepoys at Gwalior, apparently conceived the contingent as an organized body of professional soldiers whose basic allegiance was to their own organization. They seemed to be acting under the impression that their primary duty was to protect the collective interests of the contingent in every possible way. With this understanding of their role the leaders of the sepoys, around this time, were not only opposed to the removal of the main body of the contingent from Gwalior,

but they also appeared to be averse to making an overtly rebellious move that might endanger the existing organization of the contingent of which the English officers were an important part. Thus, their attitude of flouting the directive to march to Chanderi without giving too much provocation to brigadier Ramsay or Scindia. Apparently the English officers at Gwalior on their part also vaguely appreciated this self-perception of the sepoys and their leaders. It is worth noting that, despite this incident of 16 May, down to 23 May, the English officers continued to regard the conduct of the contingent as 'exemplary'.

From 26 May onwards the situation at Gwalior suddenly tended to become very tense. This happened as a consequence of the arrival of the emissaries of the sepoys as well as ordinary deserters from the rebellious units of the Bengal Army located in different places all over north India ('our possessions' in Macpherson's words). The rumour that the flour and sugar 'mixed with pigs' and bullocks' bones had arrived for sale at Gwalior from Agra' first started circulating in the town on 22 May. Then started the arrival of deserters emissaries as well as letters from Delhi and other centres of rebellion. This development seems to have crystallized a body of opinion in the ranks of the contingent that pressed for the immediate overthrow of the English officers. This was a line of action which to begin with was not favoured by everyone. Many sepoys were, perhaps, not too sure of the advisability of giving up the cautious course adopted by them immediately after the outbreak at Meerut and Delhi. These differences among the sepoys, however, were resolved through long and tortuous discussions that followed. Macpherson has reproduced the information given to him by Scindia on 26 May on these discussions. According to this information the sepoys 'administered' pledges to each other on Ganges water 'amid infinite boastings of destruction of the English power and all Christians'. Subsequent events go to show that these discussions finally led to a consensus among the sepoys of the contingent in favour of an uprising at an appropriate moment. Information conveyed by Scindia to Macpherson on 26 May clearly indicated that already by that date the contingent had 'ceased to be the servants of the government.'

All that we know of the contingent's behaviour between 26 May to 14 June, tends to suggest that unlike the revolts by the units of the Bengal Army at different stations in the North Western Province and central India, the contingent's uprising of 14 June was a carefully planned action. It was executed, by and large, quite successfully under an efficient

leadership which was fully committed to keeping the entire establishment of the contingent intact after eliminating the English officers. During this period, the sepoys and the native officers of the 14th infantry regiment (some of whom had earlier played a conspicuous role in 'restoring order' at Etawah) emerged as the most active elements in the leadership. The manner in which the contingent's leaders were able to throw their English officers off their guard between 29 May and 14 June was an indication of the careful planning that had gone into organizing the revolt. Scindia and Macpherson are reported to have tried their best to convince major Ramsay and other Englishmen serving under him that they could no longer trust the contingent. But these officers were not convinced. They continued to regard a majority of the contingent sepoys as totally loyal to them. Despite repeated reports coming to the officers, from diverse channels, of the revolt being imminent and despite the false alarm on 29 May, they refused to shift to the Residency for protection.

That after 29 May the entire contingent was resolutely committed to staging an uprising is also borne out by the behaviour of its infantry brigades stationed at Neemuch and Sultanpur. After they revolted on 3 and 13 June respectively, these regiments significantly enough did not betray the same kind of hesitation that marked the conduct of the 1st cavalry at Hathras in the third week of May (19–23 May). This may be explained in terms of the prevailing consensus among the members of the contingent favouring immediate revolt which was perhaps missing earlier.

During the same period, the leaders of the contingent were, apparently, moving with great caution. While all the time preparing an uprising, they also strived deliberately to strengthen the Brigadier's as well other English officers illusions of sepoys continued loyalty to them. In an obvious attempt to put the English officers off their guard, on 29 May, 'the 4th regiment, most suspected, formally petitioned to the brigadier to be led anywhere against the rebels.' When on 7 June, the same regiment and 'Stuart's Battery' were ordered to proceed, under captain Murry, to Jhansi for putting down rebellion there, these troops readily abided by this order without giving the slightest indication of their being already committed to engineering a revolt at Gwalior itself. Many more similar instances can be cited.

There was another noteworthy aspect of the behaviour of the contingent's disaffected sepoys, present at Gwalior, during this period

(that is between 29 May and 14 June). Unlike the disaffected sepoys of Scindia's army, those of the contingent's seem to have avoided resorting to individual or group desertions. In this context it is worth keeping in mind that actions like group or individual desertions by their very nature amount not only to severing ties of allegiance and service with the established authority but also tend to contribute to the dissolution of the organizations to which the deserters originally belonged. It is possible the sepoys of the contingent desisted from deserting primarily on account of their strong feeling of self identification with the establishment in which they were employed. But partly at least this may also be ascribed to the firm hold of the contingent's newly risen leadership over the rank and file of the sepoys and also to their anxiety to keep the English officers off their guards.

But, in the existing situation of mounting tension, the contingent's sepoys could keep up this charade of being loyal and obedient to their English officers only up to a point. There were certain kind of orders which if given, possibly, left the sepoys with no option but to disobey. One such order was issued on 13 June. Half a regiment of the infantry and the men serving two of the contingent's guns were ordered to proceed to villages Parso and Sakurwuree. This order as recorded by Macpherson in his report does not clearly spell out the aim of the proposed move. It is, however, this very move on the part of sepoys that might have prematurely warmed the English officers of the impending uprising.

II

The ouster of the English officers on 14 June was by all indications a well organized operation which enabled the leaders of the revolt to capture the entire establishment of the contingent intact and with minimum of bloodshed. After the initial killings of a few officers and their families (7 officers, 6 sergeants, and pensioners, 3 women and 3 children) on the night of 14 June, the rebel leaders were, able to restrain the sepoys from committing further atrocities. It is no doubt true that among the rebels of Gwalior there were elements, very much present, who possibly, out of their religious fanaticism ardently favoured a general massacre of the English. This bloodthirsty tendency was, however, sought to be kept under check by those who had led the uprising within the contingent on 14 June.

Commenting on this situation, Macpherson observes: 'Against our rule the contingent apparently acted as one man. They were so much divided as to the slaughter of the officers, that 4 out of 7 infantry regiments, 2 out of 4 Batteries of Artillery, and the two Regiments of Cavalry excepting a party at Gwalior, killed none.' Then he goes on to give credit, though implicitly, for this restraint shown by a majority of the sepoys, to the leaders who organized the uprising in the following words: 'It does not appear to have been their plan to murder the women and children—at least next day, they sent off, after very insulting treatment, those who survived to the Maharaja.' At another place, he records the specific cases of English officers who were helped by the rebelling sepoys themselves to reach the Residency safely. Macpherson writes: 'The cantonment guards favoured or aided actively in escaping several officers and families. Thus of the 2nd regiment, 3 men escorted Lieutenant and carried his wife in a litter 7 miles to the Residency. And the guards of the 1st Regiment over the family of its absent commandant behaved admirably. The rear-guard of the 4th Regiment protected most faithfully captains Murry and Meade and their families while a party of the 2nd came to destroy them.' The same was the behaviour of the contingents at Neemuch and Sipree. The general pattern was that of sparing the lives of the English officers but at the same time they were made to leave the cantonment with enough violence and harshness to make them feel insecure at Gwalior.

Apparently, this treatment of the English officers was aimed at inducing them to leave Gwalior immediately. This is borne out by Macpherson's narrative. It seems that, as soon as he set out, on 15 May, from the Gwalior fort for proceeding to Agra, even the most fanatical elements among the rebels lost much of their keenness to pursue and attack him. This is clearly brought out by Macpherson's account of his coming face to face, on 14 and 15 June consecutively, with a band of ghazis led by rebel leader, Jahangir Khan. On the night of 14 June, while he was being escorted by Scindia's horsemen from the Residency to Phoolbagh Palace, this band of ghazis (partly consisting of the sepoys belonging to the contingent) surrounded his carriage and demanded vehemently that they be allowed to kill him. The guards escorting Macpherson on that occasion saved his life by pretending as if they were carrying him as a prisoner of Scindia. But only twenty-four hours later the same band intercepted Macpherson again at the village Hingorah. Then he was proceeding towards Dholpur taking with him all those Englishmen, women, and children who had

survived the massacre of the previous night. Interestingly enough the attitude of the ghazis towards Macpherson and his party at this occasion was much less violent than what it was on the previous night. The leader of the band, Jahangir Khan, 'protested that he did not wish to injure' them. '(He) came to visit us', writes Macpherson, 'arrayed in green with beads fingered in ceaseless prayer. But in concert with him, a body of plunderers were assembled to attack us in the ravine fringing the river.' It is thus very obvious from Macpherson's own narrative that after it had become evident that the ousted English officers were moving away to Agra, even the most fanatical elements of the contingent's sepoys were no longer very keen to attack them. But they were of course very eager that the English party should leave Gwalior territory as early as possible. It is significant that on 15 June Jahangir Khan did not try to block Macpherson's progress towards the ferry on Chambal which led to Dholpur. One cannot but attribute Jahangir Khan's changed attitude towards Macpherson and his entourage to the advice of the leaders who had captured power within the contingent a day earlier.

The rebel leaders of the contingent appeared to be endeavouring from the very beginning to prevent its dissolution into small bands headed by individual native officers. They could hope to ensure against such a possibility first and foremost by keeping under check the Wahabi elements present within the contingent from acting in a chaotic manner. The Muslim sepoys influenced by the Wahabi doctrines had the tendency to join the roaming bands of the ghazis. This naturally threatened to undermine the organization of the contingent. From Macpherson's description of the band led by Jahangir Khan on 15 June one can infer that within twenty-four hours of the uprising hundreds of the sepoys of the contingent had turned ghazis. They had allied round a person who was no longer an officer of the contingent.[33] It was precisely this trend that the rebel leaders of the contingent appeared to be very eager to thwart. They seem to have tried to keep the fanatical zeal of these elements within acceptable limits by discouraging excesses against the ousted English officers.

The policy of the rebel leaders in this respect appears to have met with wide acceptability among the Hindu as well as Muslim sepoys. But in one isolated case it did lead to a rift between the over zealous ranks and their officers, who possibly in pursuance of the accepted policy, tried to save the lives of the English officers. The sepoys of the 3rd infantry regiment,

after their revolt on 17/18 June at Sipree, accused five of their Indian officers of helping the Englishmen and of accepting bribes from them. They took a collective decision to turn them out of the regiment.[34] This episode deserves notice as it brings to light the prevailing differences among the rebels over the treatment to be meted out to the ousted English officers. In the present context it must, however, be stated that despite such occasional difficulties, on the whole, the policy of checking excesses against the discomfitured Englishmen was abided by the rank and field of the contingent without much protest. This in turn helped in discouraging, the chaotic behaviour of the unruly elements in general.

But another and far more effective devise which the rebel leaders adopted for keeping the contingent intact was that of announcing the appointment of its new commanding officer who was given the designation of a general. This position went to Inayat Ali, till then a *subedar*-major of the 1st infantry regiment. Seemingly Inayat Ali's rise to the position of the commanding officer of the contingment had the support of the most of the leading elements among the native officers as well as that of the ordinary sepoys. The other high positions in the contingent vacated by the English officers were also filled in a similar manner.

This new team of officers seems to have directed the regiments stationed outside Gwalior to return to the headquarters after removing their English officers. It is suggested by the behaviour of the regiments stationed at Sultanpur (revolted 13 June), Sipree (revolted 17–18 June), and Agra (revolted 3–4 July). Each one of them came to Gwalior after overthrowing the English officers. In this respect the behaviour of the 7th regiment at Neemuch, who had revolted as early as 3–4 June, apparently, without consulting the rebel leaders at Gwalior, was an exception. Instead of coming to Gwalior, it marched, in the company of the Bengal Brigade, directly to Agra, participated in an inconclusive action against the force led by brigadier there and then proceeded to Delhi.[35] This behaviour of the 7th Regiment resembled the chaotic ways of the elements influenced by the Wahabis. But most of the other regiments stationed outside Gwalior, seem to have, by and large, followed the directions issued to them by the high command headed by 'General Inayat Ali'.

There also survives some evidence indicating that those who were managing the affairs of the contingent after 14 June took pains to keep its organization in good shape. Each regiment not only retained but carefully guarded its banners and other paraphernalia. The practices like posting

of guards, grand rounds, drill, and others, were also carefully adhered to.[36] The artillery was kept in a fairly good state of readiness. Perhaps steps were also taken to produce at Gwalior, percussion caps charged with fulminating powder for use in the latest type of English handguns available with the contingent.

For the day to day management of the contingent and also for paying the salaries of its sepoys and officers, the rebel leaders needed a constant supply of funds which could be provided only by Scindia. Rupees four and a half lacs collected from the ceded district of Orai, which were meant for meeting the expenses of the contingent, were deposited by Macpherson with Scindia only a few days before the uprising. That amount, regarded by the sepoys of the contingent as theirs was still with him. On 11 June Scindia demonstratively took over the charge of the ceded 'districts' of Bhander and Kuchwahagarh the revenues of which were also set aside for meeting the expenses of the contingent. In this background it was quite understandable that the leaders of the contingent should expect Scindia to take the responsibility of maintaining the contingent. But despite such an expectation they were, at least to begin with, very clear in their minds that they should not agree to the contingent's taking up service under Scindia. This is borne out by the demands which the leaders of the contingent made upon Scindia immediately after the ouster of the English officers. The demands were: (a) That he should make over to them the Rs four and a half lacs treasure deposited with him by Macpherson; (2) That he should lead the contingent in an attack on the fort of Agra which was then being defended by a small English force; (3) That the contingent after it conquered Agra for Scindia would be free to move wherever it preferred; (4) That in anticipation of this service Scindia should give to the contingent a sum of an additional Rs twelve to fifteen lacs which it needed for replenishing supplies and repair of equipments. These demands were not acceptable to Scindia basically owing to their political thrust. It was obvious that the rebel leaders were trying to lure Scindia into making use of the contingent for regaining the territories that his predecessor had lost to the English during the preceding three decades. Scindia as well as many of his Marhatta sardars were, however, quite convinced in their minds that the English authority would soon be re-established in the whole of north India. They did not see any real gain in the plan suggested by the rebel leaders.

Scindia turned the tables on the rebel leaders by formally announcing

his acceptance of the entire contingent implied a promise of meeting regularly the salary bills of the sepoys. This was a step which they were in no position to oppose as a large number of the sepoys were bound to be attracted by the prospect of their salaries being paid regularly from Scindia's treasury. This arrangement, however, clearly tended to undermine the autonomous status that the contingent had acquired after the overthrow of the English officers. It also left little scope for it to play a significant role in the ongoing anti-English struggle to which the leaders as well as the sepoys of the contingent appear to be deeply committed. For these leaders, taking up Scindia's service would have been sensible only if he was to come out openly on the rebels' side which they knew was an impossibility. That Scindia and his *Diwan* were having secret correspondence with the Political Agent and other English officials at Agra and Jabalapur could not have remained a secret to them. Yet in view of the promise of regular salaries that Scindia's service held out to the ordinary sepoys and to a lesser extent also for the advantage of finding a symbol of political legitimacy to rally round, they appear to have reluctantly agreed to the *fait accompli* of Scindia's announcement.

From Macpherson's report one knows that in offering to accept the contingent in his service, Scindia was not at all sincere. He was all the time in league with the British. Scindia had given a promise to Macpherson before latter's leaving Gwalior on 15 June to resort to such a step as a stratagem aimed at keeping the contingent tied down to Gwalior till the end of September. The idea was to prevent it from intervening at any point in north India on the rebels' side before the English forces were able to turn the tide. Initially, the leaders of the contingent were perhaps partly taken in by Scindia's false pretentions. They failed to realize the full extent of his involvement with the British. The contingent's leaders vainly hoped that in the long run it would be possible for them to pressurize Scindia into acting against the British forces. Their experience of the next four months, that the contingent was at Gwalior, belied these hopes all together. Scindia was too clever as well as too resourceful a prince to be handled in the same manner in which the sepoy leaders were able to handle Bahadur Shah at Delhi. His greatest strength lay in his 10,000 strong army. Many of his sepoys and officers, particularly his Rohilla cavalry-men shared the anti-British sentiments of the members of the contingent but they were not prepared to allow Scindia's personal humiliation. The contingent's artillery of course gave it definite military

advantage over Scindia. Actual use of artillery not feasible. It could only be used for pressurizing him. A large scale cannonading of the fort would have certainly turned Scindia's own army as well as a considerable section of the Rajput chiefs of the neighbourhood against the contingent rendering its position at Gwalior difficult to maintain.

For the next four months that the contingent was still at Gwalior, there continued a war of wits between Scindia and the rebel leaders. While the rebel leaders again and again pressed Scindia to lead them against the British, he went on putting them off on various pretexts. During this period, there seems to have taken place a gradual transformation in the leadership which deserves notice.

As the time passed, persons advocating a more militant attitude towards Scindia were to have a greater say in the leadership. Within the contingent the decisions on policy matters began to be taken in a more pronouncedly populist manner which was bound to push the professionalism of the leaders into the background. Macpherson, who was kept informed about these developments by Scindia as well as his regular news-writers, describes this situation succinctly. 'The troops', he writes, 'spent their whole time in councils, *punchayats*, courts, and deputations'. Scindia had to receive in his palace daily large deputations from every corps. Each one of these deputations would be accompanied by thirty to hundred 'private delegates' who would be there to watch over the conduct of their representatives. 'They menaced, beseeched, dictated, until they planted their batteries against him (Scindia).' But it is significant to note that these threats of cannonading Scindia's quarters were never translated into actual practice. Apparently despite the growing populist pressure the professionally inclined elements among the leaders still enjoyed sufficient clout to be able to dissuade the militants from such a step.

During the month of July the situation at Gwalior tended to become difficult and very complicated from the point of view of the rebel leaders. Most threatening aspect of this situation was the cropping up of serious differences in the contingent's ranks on parochial lines. These differences sometimes even led to limited parochial form of division. It seems that the *Porbees* mostly high caste Hindus, pleaded for the contingent to move away to Kanpur which was located closer to the region from where they hailed. As against this the element from 'the north', most Muslims recruited from the Doab region as well as those hailing from Gwalior itself (among

whom naturally would also, be included a large number of Marhattas) were insisting that it would be better to go to Agra and from there to Delhi. These differences were apparently so pronounced that Scindia instigated by the English officers shut up in the Agra fort tried to use a section of sepoys against the other. He even went to the extent of offering bribes to the officers of the contingent and 'their priests' for instigating the sepoys to continue to press their respective views vehemently. This problem tended to become particularly serious after the arrival of the rebels of Indore and Mhow (mainly of Holkar's army) at Morar on 31 July. They were on their way to Agra and were very eager to persuade the contingent to accompany them. This was bound to aggravate differences between the Porbees and the rest. And then, around the same time arrived at Gwalior sepoys of 6th Infantry regiment who were dispersed from Kanpur after Nana Sahib's flight from there on 15 July.

These fugitives from Kanpur started spreading within contingent's ranks a very defeatist view. They reportedly argued that the leader's plans to engage the British forces was impracticable and advised them to give up all such ideas. This defeatist view was of course rejected by the leaders as well as by all the sections of sepoys. But it had one very negative impact. Advocacy of a defeatist line of action by one whole regiment appears to have created a sharp reaction among those groups who were demanding a more militant attitude towards Scindia from the very beginning. They became still more insistent on the demand to severe links with Scindia. It is likely that this force was directed against the Rajput zamindars of the area to southeast of Gwalior who were adopting an increasingly defiant attitude towards Scindia, since the outbreak of insurrection in the North Western Province. According to Macpherson, on this occasion, the 2nd regiment simply refused to move out of Gwalior. After the commencement of insurrection, this was, in fact, the second time that the contingent's sepoys showed their disinclination to get involved in operations directed against the Rajput zamindars. Before this, the contingent had adopted a similar attitude on 16 May.

In view of these facts, one is tempted to speculate a possible inclination of the newly risen leaders of the contingent towards giving up its role as an instrument of coercion against the local zamindars. They had possibly resolved soon after the commencement of insurrection in the north not to allow the involvement of the contingent in any military operations that were directed against the zamindars. But then one must concede

that all this is nothing but speculation. It is possible that the 2nd infantry regiment's refusal to march against Parsa and Sakurwdree was only an isolated incident to troops defiance who were already committed to stage an uprising against their English officers. One should, however, not overlook the fact that this incident took place in spite of leadership's general attitude of not allowing any links with Scindia and advocated an immediate march to Agra or Delhi. This in turn made the task of rebel leaders still more difficult. It, however, seems that despite these growing complications the rebel leaders were still able to stick to their original line of action of trying to preserve the organization of the contingent with Scindia's help and of pressurizing him into aligning himself openly with the rebels. That the rebel leaders were able to have their way in rejecting formal offers brought by Nana Sahib's and Rani Lakshmi Bai's *Wakils* sometime in August for hiring the contingent's services in return for very high payments seems to suggest their firm adherence to this line of action. It is of course true that Macpherson ascribes the rejection of Nana Sahib's and Rani Lakshmi Bai's offers to Scindia's propaganda and manipulations. But in this regard one must not lose sight of the fact that the final decision on these offers was taken by the rebel leaders themselves in a situation when a sizeable section of the sepoys were already favouring the contingent's joining, without further delay, the rebel forces in the north. Thus one can see that roughly down to the end of August despite general demoralization created by the rebels discomfiture at Agra and Kanpur, and in spite of all the other complications, the rebel leaders of the contingent were still in command of the situation.

On the eve of the Indore rebels setting out from Morar for Agra (5 September), the position of the rebel leaders as well as the line of action to which they were sticking so stoutly for the preceding two and half months received a severe jolt. At this time, the differences within the ranks of the contingent seem to have grown to the point that a sizeable number of troops were encouraged to join the Indore rebels' camp. This amounted to opting out of the main body of the contingent by a large body of sepoys, a development which the rebel leaders were struggling so hard to avert.

Subsequent to the departure of Indore rebels for Agra, the rebel leaders found it very difficult to keep the sepoys pacified. The sepoys refused to trust them for negotiations with Scindia. At a meeting with Scindia on 7 September (three days after the departure of the Indore rebels) the sepoys

'observers' became unruly. After thrusting aside their representatives they came forward to tell Scindia that as he was still refusing to lead them against British forces without further delay, they were now giving up service under him. On return to their cantonment the sepoys and their leaders announced the autonomous status of the contingent by planting green and white flags as the new rallying symbols for them respectively.

During the next one and a half months the contingent was perhaps busy making preparations for a march against Kanpur which was already under British control. Apparently once the sepoys had forced the decision to severe links with Scindia, the rebel leaders fell in line with them. They now took pains to ensure that the contingent was able to put a good show in the impending struggle. That these efforts were not entirely wasted is borne out by the humiliating defeat that the contingent inflicted on the English force commanded by general Windham (a hero of the Crimean war) near Kanpur on 27 November 1857. On that occasion the contingent had also succeeded in reoccupying Kanpur briefly for the rebels. This was the only occasion during the 1857 rebellion when a rebel force was able to defeat an English army of matching strength in an open battle. Frederick Engels had celebrated this victory of the rebels by writing a special article in the *New York Daily Tribune* of 20 February 1858 which was entirely devoted to this event; it was titled 'Windham's defeat'. The credit for this remarkable achievement of the contingent should go to the heroism and devotion of its sepoys as well as to professional competence of the men who were leading them after the ouster of the English officers. Even after its defeat on 6 December 1858 at the hands of general Campbell, the contingent succeeded in withdrawing to Kalpi without loosing its formation, carrying with it a major art of its artillery. The contingent, however, ceased to exist following the disorderly withdrawal of the rebel forces from Kalpi in May 1858. But to be fair to the contingent and its leaders one must not forget that the situation within the rebel camp at Kalpi was controlled not by them but by the powerful rebel figures and the utterly disorganized troops following them, who perhaps did not give to the contingent a chance to show their mettle once again.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx, 'The Indian Question', *New York Daily Tribune*, 28 July 1857, reproduced in *The First Indian War of Independence*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975, p. 48.

2. Karl Marx, 'The Revolt in the Indian Army', *New York Daily Tribune*, 15 July 1857, reproduction in *The First Indian War of Independence*, pp. 36–7.

3. Karl Marx, 'The State of the Indian Insurrection', *New York Tribune*, 31 July 1857, reproduced in *The First Indian War of Independence*, p. 50.

4. *The Bengal Hurkaru and Indian Gazette*, 4 June 1857, commenting on the rebels' proclamations in Awadh that was couched in most abusive language for those who were not joining them observes: 'there are reasons to believe, (these proclamations) are written by people who like Scottish robber, would like to see the world turned upside down', (cited from A. A. Rizvi's *Freedom Struggle in U.P.*, Vol. II, Lucknow, 1950, p. 83).

5. E. Stokes, *The Peasants Armed*, ed., C.A. Bayly, 1986, pp. 216–27.

6. For large scale participation of the zamindar of Awadh, see Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt, 1857–1858*, Oxford University Press, 1984. For a contemporary assessment, see also Letter from M.H. Court, Magistrate and Collector, Allahabad, to C. Chester, Commissioner, Allahabad Division, dated 21 July 1857 in Judicial File No. 3, 1858, Allahabad Collectorate, Mutiny Records, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad, reproduced in A. A. Rizvi, *Freedom Struggle of U.P.*, Vol. IV, p. 558. Court observes: 'There is a very general impression abroad that the zamindars and agricultural population generally are not against us, but with great reluctance, I declare my belief that this is a mistake.'

7. Cf. K. M. Ashraf, *Rebellion, 1857*, ed., P. C. Joshi, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, p. 71.

8. Frederick Engels, 'The Capture of Delhi', *New York Daily Tribune*, 5 December 1857, reproduced in *The First Indian War of Independence*. Even after, conceding that 'some notions of scientific warfare had penetrated among the sepoys', he goes on to suggest, without referring to any evidence, that the plan for the defence of Delhi bearing a close resemblance to the defence of Sebastopol in the Crimean War must have been prepared 'for the sepoys by some Europeans that are with them'.

9. According to Frederick Engels, as late as December 1857, the sepoys of the Gwalior contingent 'were the only insurgent troops, the formation of which can be said to go beyond that of companies', relating 'something like organized battalions'. 'Windhams Defeat', *New York Daily Tribune*, 20 February 1858, reproduced in *The First Indian War of Independence*, p. 117. It seems that down to May 1858 when the rebels were forced to abandon Kalpi, the contingent still retained its artillery as well as its regimental standards. These were captured by Major-General Hugh Rose on his entry into the fort of the Kalpi. (Major-General Hugh Rose's letter to Major General W. M. Mansfield, dated 22 June 1858, reproduced in A. A. Rizvi, *Freedom Struggle in U.P.*, Vol. III, p. 404).

10. For the disorders in Gwalior resulting from Jiyaji Rao's minority and Lord Edenbourgh's imposing a treaty on Scindia after defeating Gwalior army in December 1843, cf. H. H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V,

1929, p. 578. Cf. Foreign Department, Political Consultations, dated 23 March 1844, No. 568, National Archives of India, New Delhi, where details relating to the disbanding of the Gwalior army in 1844 are given.

11. Foreign Department, 19 February 1844, I/CA, National Archives of India.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Cf. Foreign Department, Secret Consultations, 28 August 1857, No. 133, National Archives of India, contains a circular sent by H. M. Durand, Officiating Agent of Governor General for Central India, dated 23 May 1857, stating that 'the General Order No. 677 of 14 May 1857, Military Department, is to be considered applicable to all sections of the contingent troops where British Officers commanded'. For the close consultations between the Political Agent and the Brigadier, commanding the contingent in May–June 1857, see Major Charles Macpherson's report to R. Hamilton Rust, Agent of the Governor General for Central India, dated 10 February 1858 in *Foreign Political Proceedings, 18 October*, from page 476 onwards (hereafter referred to as *Report*).

15. Cf. *Report* and also Foreign Department, 23 March 1844, 716/C, National Archives of India. Compare, Khushhalilal Srivastava, *The Revolt of 1857 in Central India-Malwa*, 1966, p. 55.

16. A Letter Addressed to Lt. Colonel Sleeman, Agent of Governor General for the affairs of Scindia's Dominions, Foreign Department, 23 March 1844, 723/CA, National Archives of India.

17. For the strength of the contingent in 1857, see John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, Vol. III, London, 1880, p. 309n.

18. With the help of *Report* and other records of the revolt at Gwalior, it is possible to prepare a list of 16 Englishmen serving as officers in the contingent.

19. According to Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, p. 309, 'The contingent was little more than a local branch of our own military establishment'.

20. See for example *Report*. For the fact that the first detachment of the contingent's cavalry was consisting of all Muslims while in the artillery there were one fourth Muslims, see Macpherson's letter to Lt. Governor, dated 16 May 1857, in Foreign Political Proceedings, 1–8 October 1858.

21. Cf. Macpherson's letter to Lt. Governor, dated 20 May 1857 in *Political Proceedings*, 1–8 October 1858, p. 534. 'The 70 horse under Major Rallis are Hindus of *Kychee* caste'.

22. For Baiza Bai's antecendents see K. L. Srivastava, *The Revolt of 1857*, pp. 6 and 32.

23. K. L. Srivastava gives the strength of these irregular troops as 17,540 men. He apparently borrows this information from an official document missed by me (Cf. Srivastava, *The Revolt of 1857*, p. 90).

24. According to the Macpherson (see *Report*) the Marhattas and other officers of Scindia who were the survivors of the old wars, as well as his chief sardars believed in the invincibility of the British authority. This seems to have been the main reason for their refraining from joining the rebels. Some of Scindia's troops, particularly Marhattas among them, were bound to be influenced by this state of mind of their officers. But the fact that several of Scindia's corps manned by troops recruited from the North Western Province became deeply disaffected following the revolts at Meerut and Delhi is borne out by a number of incidents recorded by Macpherson. One of these was the desertion on 29 May, by Scindia's 'chosen Mohammadan guards at the Residency' who reportedly escaped to Delhi. Subsequent to this event there were daily desertions from Scindia's army. Most of the men who deserted were those recruited from the North Western Province and Awadh ('our provinces' in the words of Macpherson).

25. The evidence pointing to continuous desertions by Scindia's Muslim troops recruited from the British provinces as well as by the Wilayatis belonging to Baiza Bai's personal contingent to join the rebels at Delhi may partly be attributed to the influence of the Wahabis' doctrines on their minds. According to Macpherson (see *Reports*), on the next day of the revolt at Gwalior, that is, on 15 May, a certain Jahangir Khan was able to raise a body of 200 ghazis, who were earlier serving in the contingent as well as other corps.

26. Ahmadullah Shah, who during 1857 uprising, led large ghazi bands in Awadh 'gave himself out to be a disciple of Mehrab Shah a holy man of Gwalior'. Ahmadullah Shah himself was residing at Gwalior for a long time. Deposition of Wazir Khan, late Sub-Assistant Surgeon of Agra Dispensary, Foreign Political Proceedings, 30 December 1859, No. 310. National Archives of India cited from A. A. Rizvi, *Freedom Struggle of U.P.*, Vol. II, p. 147.

27. *Report* mentions the following names—Brigadier Ramsay, Captain Meade, Major Henessy, Major Black, Hawkins, and Stuart (officers of artillery corps whose ranks are not indicated), Captain Murry, Lieutenant Tomkinson, Seriff (rank not mentioned). Lieutenant Proctor, Lieutenant Pierson, Captain Alexander, Captain Hills, Major Macpherson, Lieutenant Cekbur, Sergeant (Dr) Jules.

28. For Lord Canning's remark in one of his despatches to the Court of Directors—'if Scindia joins the rebellion, I shall have to pack off tomorrow'—see Ashok Mehta, *The Great Rebellion*, 1946, p. 39.

29. Foreign Department, Secret Consultation, 28 August 1857, No. 133, National Archives of India.

30. Cf. *Report*.

31. Political Proceedings: 1–5 October 1858, p. 534, National Archives of India.

32. *Report*.

33. Jahangir Khan was originally a *havldar* in the contingent. After leaving the contingent, he became a Captain in Scindia's army. At the time of uprising at Gwalior on 14 June, he had become 'a ghazi leader of the highest pretension of sanctity'. According to Macpherson's information, on 15 June, he was on his way to Delhi (see *Report*).

34. Letter from Scindia to Major S. C. Macpherson in *Political Proceedings*, 1–8 October 1858.

35. *Report* and J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, Vol. III, p. 383.

36. See letter from Major-General Hugh Rose to Major-General W. M. Mansfield, Gwalior, 22 June 1857, included in *Selections from State Papers*, Vol. IV, 'Central India', pp. 82–103. According to him, till their defeat at Kalpi in May 1858, 'All the Sepoy Regiments kept up, carefully, their English equipment and organization, the words of command for drill, grand rounds, and others were given as we could hear, at night in English. Cited from Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Freedom Struggle in U.P.*, Vol. III, p. 388. It may be suggested that this description would mainly apply to the regiments of the Gwalior contingent then present in the fort of Kalpi. As Engels remarked in his article in *New York Daily Tribune* of 2 Febraury 1858 (included in *The First Indian War of Independence*, p. 117), by this time, the contingent was the only rebel force 'the formation of which can be said to go beyond that of companies, as they had been officered by natives almost exclusively, and thus, with their field officers and captains, retained something like organized battalion'.

PART V

Popular Protest

Traditional Elites in the Great Rebellion of 1857*

Some Aspects of Rural Revolt in the Upper and Central Doab

ERIC STOKES

Rural revolt in 1857 was essentially elitist in character. Things may have been otherwise in the cities and towns, where as at Aligarh (Koil) 'the low Muhammedan rabble' could become a potent revolutionary force. But in the countryside the mass of the population appears to have played little part in the fighting or at most tamely followed the behests of its caste superiors. The dominant castes and communities that took the lead in rebellion were a minority of the population, and, of these, the owners of land were a still smaller group. Figures for the classification and enumeration of population have to be treated with reserve, but it is interesting to note, for example, that in Aligarh district in 1872 landowners numbered some 26,551 or $2^1/_2$ per cent of the total population.[1] In Mathura district where cultivating proprietary brotherhoods of Jats were thick on the ground the proportion was higher, some $6^1/_2$ per cent. Roughly 47,000 owners (including non-agriculturalists) controlled an adult male agricultural population of 1,29,000 cultivators; in other words one in three male agriculturalists owned land.[2] It was one in six in the Ganges Canal Tract of the Muzaffarnagar district where the landowning castes—Tagas, Jats, Rajputs, Sayyids, Sheikhs, Gujars, Borahs, Marhals, and Mahajans—comprised one-third of the population.[3] In Mainpuri district the Rajputs formed just over 8 per cent of the population and held about one-half of the land.[4] Even, therefore, where 'village republics' owned the land, as in the Jat *bhaiachara* settlements in northern Mathura or in the western portions of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts, the proprietary

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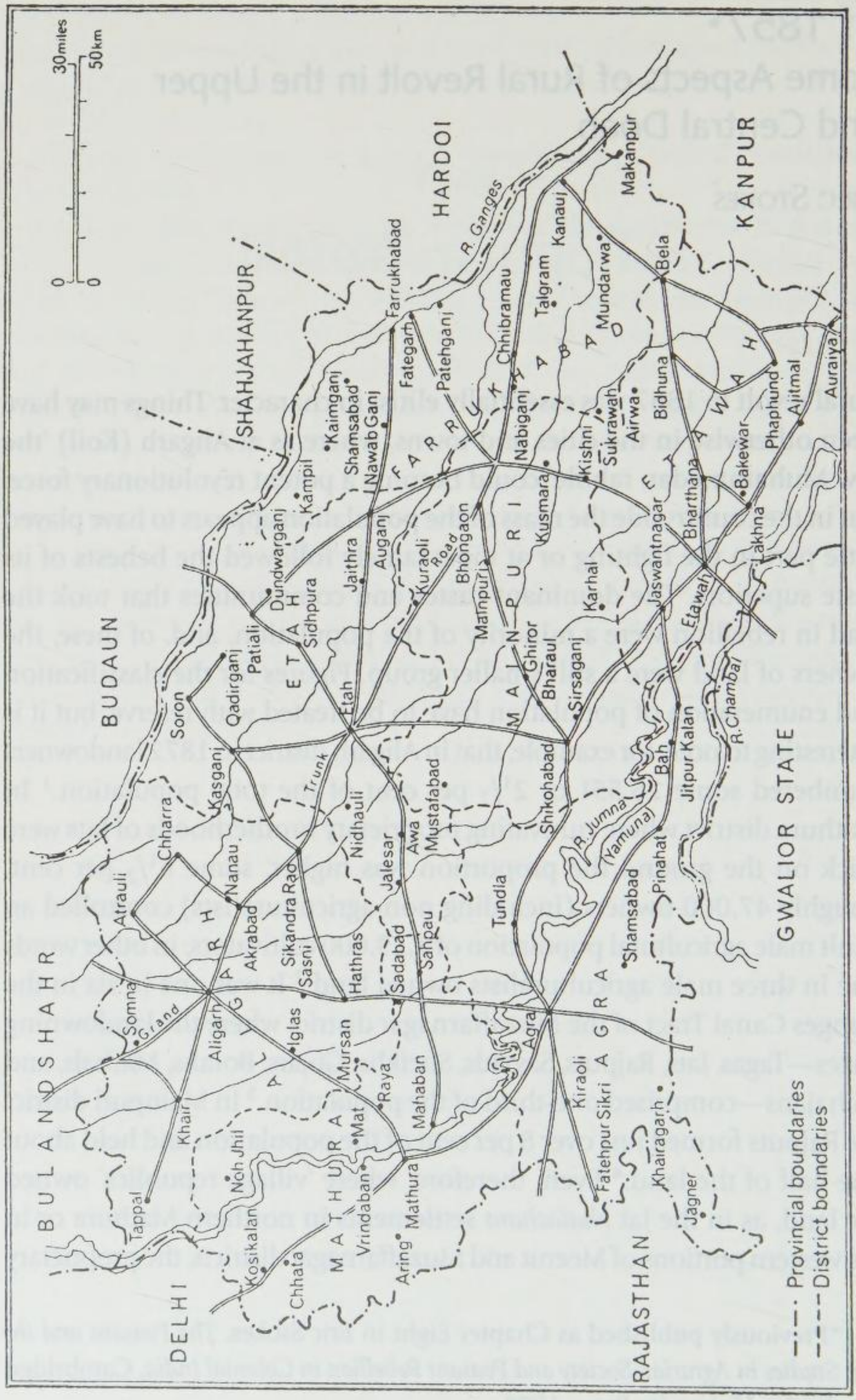

Map 1: The Agra Region

body was very much a rural elite. This fact deserves emphasis since it is all too easy to view the peasantry as a rural proletariat.

Most accounts trace the rural rebellion to the revolutionary effects upon the traditional landholding classes of British legal and institutional innovations. The tendering of the *malguzari* right (the right to engage for the government revenue) freely alienable and saleable is held to have resulted in a vast transfer of land rights, and the displacement of much of the traditional elite—whether magnate or village zamindars—by the urban trading and money-lending classes, and by office-holders drawn from the literate castes.[5] Unquestionably there was a high rate of transfer of proprietary title (though not, of course, of actual cultivating possession), not only in the early fumbling period of British rule but in the later pre-Rebellion decades when the administrative machine was functioning more regularly. In some districts the rate ran as high as 2 per cent per annum, so that, as in Aligarh district, title to more than 50 per cent of the land could change hands in the two decades after 1838.[6] But although the non-agricultural classes made extensive acquisitions, increasing their hold up to as much as 18 per cent of the total cultivation (as in Saharanpur district by 1868), their gains were nothing like proportionate to the transfer rate. As Cohn has found in the Varanasi (Benares) region a large portion of the transfers represented a circulation of property within the traditional elite. The breakdown of British authority so far from throwing this elite wholly on to the side of rebellion split it raggedly down the middle, with the result that, even within the same district, magnate or peasant proprietors of the same caste could react in quite opposite directions. In Meerut district the Jats of Hapur pargana fought stoutly on the British side; to the west on the other side of the Hindan River in Baraut and Barnawa parganas they rose in their thousands, driving off the British columns sent from Meerut and pouring supplies into rebel-held Delhi. In the Muzaffarnagar district the Sayyid communities in the eastern parganas stayed quiet, while on the other side the Muslim gentry rose to support the Thana Bhawan rising of September 1857 when the green flag of Islam was raised and a *jihad* proclaimed against the white infidel. These are complexities that confute generalized *simpliste* accounts but they are still susceptible of historical explanation.

Strong armed clan communities such as the Jat clan settlements in western Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, or those of the Gujars in western

Saharanpur or the Pandir Rajputs of southern Saharanpur flared readily into rebellion, probably out of resentment at the heavy differential revenue assessment laid upon them.[7] But the critical factor in rural reactions was the presence or absence of a thriving magnate element heavily committed by interest to British rule. Nowhere were objective conditions more ripe for revolt than among the Sayyids of the Ganges Canal Tract of eastern Muzaffarnagar. Their losses of land to the urban moneylender had been on a spectacular scale, rising in some parganas such as Khatauli to as much as 56 per cent between 1840 and 1860. But the danger of revolt was stayed by the leadership of a few thriving Sayyid families who, aided by office-holding under the British, had built up considerable estates. The same phenomenon of magnate leadership is observable in south eastern Meerut and the Bulandshahr district. Here the Jats unlike their kinsmen near the Yamuna (Jumna) followed the lead of the Jat raja of Kuchesar, Gulab Singh, who held a vast estate of more than 270 villages.[8]

What were the conditions that permitted the emergence of a prospering, collaborating magnate class? A simple answer would be that where zamindari (roughly undivided freehold) tenures were numerous, a market in land titles was more readily created and supplied the conditions of mobility in which a new, active landlord class could emerge. Eastern Muzaffarnagar mirrored such conditions. In contrast, where cultivating proprietary brotherhoods (bhaiachara) held the land, they were not readily ousted by outsiders; mobility of titles was consequently much lower, as the lighter transfer rate in the Jat areas indicate. More important than the tenurial structure of the individual village was perhaps the supra-village organization of the clan area (*khap* or *ilaqua*), which M. C. Pradhan has shown has persisted tenaciously to the present.[9] Not only did this help to keep outside encroachment at bay, but supplied a powerful political weapon for joint action among village communities. Nevertheless the difficulty which Jats or Gujars faced in revolt was the generalization of resistance to embrace other clans and groups. In the absence of individual leadership capable of welding, say, a whole district together, the rebellion of peasant communities would remain isolated and confined to their particular localities.

The critical factor remained, therefore, whether for the promotion or suppression of revolt, the action of magnate elements. Impoverished gentry could sometimes fill the gap in leadership, like Khairati Khan of Parasauli in Muzaffarnagar, an old Pindari who apparently placed himself

at the head of the Jat rising in late August 1857, but generally such men proved too lacking in scale and resources and themselves looked to magnate leaders. Thus in Bulandshahr district disaffected Muslim gentry like the Sayyids of Shikarpur rallied to the standard of Nawab Walidad Khan of Malagarh, a fallen nobleman who was related by marriage to the Delhi dynasty and well versed in public affairs. For a time Walidad rendered himself formidable, and the British were fortunate that there were few of his calibre in the central and upper Doab. But in this region most of the magnate class in fact stayed quiet or actively assisted the British. The notion that the traditional elite was driven *en bloc* into rebellion needs, therefore critical re-examination.

Aligarh district makes an interesting study in this respect. Fifty per cent of the land changed hands between 1839 and 1858, spurred by a heavy average revenue demand of Rs 2–3–1 to the cultivated acre. The moneylending and trading classes registered considerable gains, strengthening their grip from 3.4 per cent of the district in 1839 to 12.3 per cent in 1868. Yet their overall gain of 9 per cent looks modest when viewed against total transfers which evidently in the main took the form of a circulation of proprietary rights within the traditional landholding castes. Circulation took place in two ways: first in the passage of land from village proprietors to magnates, and secondly, among village proprietors themselves.

Now it may seem odd to speak of the gains of the magnate class in a district where British administrative action in the pre-Mutiny decades would appear to have been so sharply directed against them. Thornton's settlement of 1839 was notorious for its deliberate attempt to curb the Jat chieftains of Hathras and Mursan by instituting a sub-settlement, wherever possible, with the village communities. The British themselves were agreeably surprised that the magnates should stick by them in the crisis of 1857 in view of the severe mauling the magnates had supposedly received at their hands.

W. H. Smith commented in his settlement report on Aligarh in 1874:

> Scarcely one member of any of the old and powerful families of the district joined in the disturbances: on the contrary, some of these gave what assistance they could with undoubted readiness: some like Thakur Gobind Singh, nobly exposed their lives in our cause, while others afforded aid only perhaps because they doubted the policy of refusing. Strangely enough...those of the greater families

who had lost most by our rule, turned out our firmest friends in the time of trouble and need. Thakur Gobind Singh, the son of the very man whose fort we had taken and whose power we had crushed (in 1817)...was eminently loyal. He never hesitated from the first, but aided us with his followers, fought in our battles, and kept order on our behalf. Raja Tikam Singh, the son of Bhagwant Singh, whose independence we had forcibly destroyed, assisted us throughout to the utmost of his ability, though his own power had been largely reduced by the policy pursued at the last settlement by Mr Thornton. Without the aid of these two men Hathras would have been plundered, and our footing in the district for the time at least have been lost.[10]

The damage that Thornton's anti-*talukdar* settlement inflicted on the magnate interest in Aligarh was in fact, however, superficial. With the Mursan raja, Tikam Singh, the settlement was a generous one, although he continued to contest it for years afterwards in the courts. He was compensated with a fixed allowance or *malikana*—usually $22^1/_2$ per cent—of the revenue demand paid by the village proprietors (*biswadars*), but Thornton's proposal for allowing him to continue with the work of collection was rejected.[11] Nevertheless the financial arrangement worked to his advantage:

> instead of a vague title, and an income insufficient for his expenses, especially as it was never fully collected, the former [*viz.* the Raja] has now been recorded as zamindar of more than one-third of the pargana, and as hereditary talukdar with defined rights in the remainder; his income has been considerably increased, and there is every ground for hope that he will fully realise it.[12]

Given the circumstances that the Raja had pitched up the demand to such a height before Thornton's revision that the villages were falling heavily into arrears, there was much to be said from his viewpoint for an arrangement which guaranteed the coercive force of the courts for the collection of his fixed percentage of a punitively heavy demand.[13]

In contrast, so far from stabilizing and securing the village communities, Thornton's settlement completely defeated his intentions. Its close definition of landed rights seems to have been the signal for a revolution in proprietary titles, which according to Smith acquired for the first time a saleable value. In this revolution it was the magnate class as well as the moneylending and trading classes that forged ahead.[14] In the Hathras tahsil, where 'a vast revolution of property' took place, the Jats as a caste held their own without loss over the thirty years from 1839–

68, despite the fact that the transfers in the period amounted to some 66 per cent of the land:

> Thirty-four per cent of the land is now in the hands of those who occupied it at last settlement, and the majority of this belongs to Raja Tikam Singh, who has alone remained unaffected by the prevailing changes...In fact, the old village occupants, the preservation of whom was Mr Thornton's chief care and thought, have been almost crushed out of the subdivision, and new men, to a large extent Bohras and Banias, have taken their place.

Not all the talukdars, however, were as fortunate as the Mursan raja. Many of the smaller talukdars like Thakur Jiwa Ram of Mendhu and Raja Narain Singh of Husain foundered while Tikam Singh was extending his estates, buying in the biswadars of four villages and so converting his hold to full ownership (zamindari).

The village bodies suffered fearfully. The talukdari settlement, with its additional increment of malikana, laid on them burdens too grievous to be borne. An assessment that was avowedly based on extracting 80 per cent of the rental assets left them a helpless prey of the Hathras *banias* and the village *saukars*, who now revived old debts they had bought up from European indigo planters after the collapse of the late 1820s. More than a third of the talukdari villages were sold up entirely, and a further third lost more than a half of their land.[15] But the alienation statement for 1838–68 shows the main sufferers to have been the Rajput brotherhoods, who over the period lost 51 per cent of their land, their losses (of 35,284 acres) balancing almost exactly the bania gains.

Other parts of the district illustrate the same transfer of rights out of the hands of the village proprietors. In Sikandra Rao Rajput transfers were again enormous, amounting to some 41 per cent in pargana Akerabad and 57 per cent in pargana Aligarh. But the take-over of the Husain taluk by the moneylending Rajput Jadon family of Mathura (under Raja Pirthi Singh of Awa) from the Porach Rajput family, and other internal caste transfers of this kind, disguise the extent to which property changed hands. In the upshot the Thakur (Rajput) loss appears as no more than 13.4 per cent.

Unfortunately the statistics do not allow us to distinguish with any great clarity the twin processes of circulation within castes which it has been suggested occurred, first the transfer of land from village communities to magnates, and secondly the movement of land within village

communities themselves. Where the first process predominated, it seems more than likely that the magnates remained pro-British and were able to smother rebellion. The talukdari parganas, Hathras, Koil, Sikandra Rao, and Atrauli were of this kind. Disturbances, of course, did break out. Mangal Singh and Mahtab Singh, Rajput zamindars of Akrabad (tahsil Sikandra Rao) 'after the plunder of Akrabad Tehseel Treasury by sepoys, permitted the destruction of the records by their own people, refused all aid to the Tehseeldar, and generally lived a life of open rebellion'.[16] Yet they were countered by 'the most influential of Pundir Thakurs of Sikandra Rao, Jawahir Singh of Akerabad and Kundam Singh of Nai', who 'behaved remarkably well and afforded continuous and valuable aid'. Kundan Singh at the end of August 1857 was made *nazim* of the pargana, and with a body of 1,500 of his own followers reinstated the tahsildar and maintained him in that position until authority was thoroughly re-established. When he died two years afterwards 'his sons and nephews were left among the most prosperous zamindars in the tahsil'.[17]

On the western side of the district in the thickly settled Jat parganas abutting Mathura district, the two processes were still more confused since the talukdari areas ran cheek by jowl with the Jat clan khaps. While Gobind Singh was raising the Jat Horse for service on the British side, Mohammad Ghaus Khan, who had taken over the leadership of the Muslim revolt in Koil city (Aligarh), was appealing to the Jat peasantry for supplies and promising that the district of Koil would be theirs.[18] Proprietary brotherhoods notoriously stood up better to a heavy revenue demand than single zamindari estates, but, assuming they had also withstood other forms of landlord encroachment by raja or bania, their resentment usually took the form of direct rebellion. This happened at Iglas and Khair. At Iglas the Jat communities 'under the guidance of one Amani Jat, ex-pattidar of Gahon...who had then come to the surface and dubbed himself. Raja had the audacity to attack the trained troops of the Gwalior Contingent'. The same body of Jats from the Lageswan region in pargana Hasangarh joined in the attack on the government offices in Khair. Here on 20 May Rao Bhopal Singh, head of the Chauhan Rajputs of the pargana, had deposed the tahsildar, only to be surprised, caught, and hanged by Watson, the Magistrate, and his European volunteers on 1 June. The sequence was that 'before the middle of the month the Chohans of the pergunnah, intent on revenge, called in the Jats to their help, attacked Khyr, plundered and destroyed nearly all the

Government buildings, as well as the houses of the Bunyahs and Mahajuns'.[19] What bound together Jat and Rajput—hereditary enemies—in fitful alliance?

In tahsil Iglas small taluks were intermingled with village estates held by Jat proprietary brotherhoods working one of the finest tracts in the district. These taluks, such as Biswan, Kanka, Karjaut, and Gorae, each of a dozen villages or so, had stood up better here than elsewhere, but were probably too small to smother the rebellion of village communities. The severity and, above all, the unequal incidence of the revenue demand placed the village communities under cruel pressure. Where additionally a heavy malikana was exacted by the talukdar the biswadars or sub-proprietors laboured under what was later acknowledged to be 'an almost unendurable burden'.[20] Land rights changed hands freely, as much as 52 per cent of the tahsil being subject to transfer between 1838 and 1868. The industrious Thakurel branch (*got*) of Jats which held the *chauwan gaon* or fifty-four villages of Lagaswan had undoubtedly suffered inroads from the moneylender. But total Jat losses in the tahsil do not appear to have been heavy over the thirty years of the settlement; apparently they parted with some 9,500 acres of their 110,000 acres, 3,500 being confiscated for rebellion in 1857.

W. H. Smith acknowledged that the Jats had put up a 'tough resistance' to the encroachment of the moneylending Brahmin and bania, and in 1868 they still held three-quarters of the land in the tahsil. Their most burning grievance was evidently the inequity of the revenue assessment.

That the Jats of Lagaswan should have sunk their traditional feud and leagued with the Chauhan Rajputs of Khair under Rao Bhopal Singh is testimony to their hatred of British rule. The Chauhan Rajputs had still stronger cause for rebellion. In tahsil Khair as a whole the Rajputs labouring under a revenue rate of Rs 2–1–3 on the cultivation had lost almost 30 per cent of their land, while the Jats, whose holdings had equalled theirs, lost a mere 5 per cent. In Khair pargana itself the Chauhan Rajputs had in distant times held the whole area together with the neighbouring parganas of Chandaus and Murthal. By 1857 the head of this branch, Bopal Singh, was reduced to a single village, and, 'urged by the vain hope of recovering the former influence of the tribe', led the attack on the Khair tahsil offices.[21]

All these are instances where land transfers, induced for the most part by a heavy revenue demand, failed to throw up a rising landlord

element from among the traditional landholding castes. The fact that the banias made significant gains, largely at the expense of the unthrifty Rajput communities, sharpened no doubt the bitterness of loss, and made them a target for vengeance. But of themselves they hardly supply the main explanation of the pattern of rebellion. The really violent and persistent disturbances came from the bhaiachara Jat communities of the western parganas which continued into the Mathura district up to the Yamuna (Jumna) River and among whom bania gains were lowest.

The hard core of Jat settlement lay in pargana Noh Jhil in the Mathura district among the Nohwar and Narwar gots. Here the clan community was to be found in its full perfection,[22] and the strength of its organization enabled it to withstand a stiff rate of revenue assessment and keep out the moneylender. In the early years of British rule (1809) it was remarked 'there is not a mahajan in the pargana, and the zamindars are so notoriously refractory that no man of property will become security for them'.[23] Immediately after the rebellion J. R. Best, the Officiating Collector, noted that where the bhaiachara system prevailed it was almost impossible for capital to force its way. Even well after 1857 when confiscations and commercial conditions had promoted land owning by the trading classes, Whiteway, the settlement officer, could still report in the early 1870s that 'mahajans and bankers...have much less influence here than in most other parts of India'.[24]

Mark Thornhill, who had charge of the district at the outbreak of disturbances, considered Noh Jhil 'perhaps the worst Pergunnah of Muttra. It was the first that went into rebellion and the last to submit.' From this and other examples of peasant rebellion he determined on drastic measures:

> However paradoxical it may appear it is a matter of fact that the agricultural laboring class—the class who above all others have derived the most benefit from our rule—were the most hostile to its continuance, while the large proprietors who have suffered under our rule almost to a man stood by us. As soon as I had realised this fact I brought it strongly to the late Mr Colvin's notice and urged that the Government must reverse its policy and throw itself on the large proprietors and repress the peasantry.[25]

In Noh Jhil he ordered the confiscation of 22 villages and proposed to confer them on the Mathura banking family of the Seths in reward. He carried out similar extensive confiscations elsewhere, but even in the pro-magnate atmosphere of the aftermath of revolt such sweeping

proposals produced a reaction. Vansittart, the Special Commissioner, mounted a crusade to reverse the anti-peasant policy not only in Mathura but also in Agra and Etawah districts, resting himself on Burke's argument that he knew not how to draw up an indictment against a whole people. His thesis was simple: 'The main cause of rural rebellion was not the hatred of our rule but a summary adjustment by the sword of those feuds which had arisen out of the action of our Civil and Revenue laws on proprietary rights in land.'[26] Yet British rule could not be so readily exculpated, for 'the moneylenders and the mortgagers or purchasers of land' whom he saw as the enemy were scarcely in evidence in Noh Jhil or other strongly held bhaiachara clan areas. Alienation of land to outsiders was too slight to justify the sack of the Noh Jhil tahsil offices on 4 June by a crowd said to number 20,000 men,[27] which proceeded to destroy the records. One cannot but feel that the swinging revenue assessment was the root of the matter.

This was to be seen in the parganas to the south of Noh Jhil. In 1881 Robertson, the Secretary to Government, reflecting on the settlement of 1839–69, wondered how the north-eastern parganas of Mathura had stood a revenue rate (Rs 2–8–3) even higher than that of Aligarh after revision (Rs 2–6–3). But the rate rose progressively southwards, falling at Rs 2–3–2 in Mat-Noh Jhil, Rs 2–8–2 in Mahaban, Rs 2–13–0 in Sadabad, and Rs 3–1–8 in Sahpau.[28] Few communities could stand this degree of imposition, especially when they had not the tight clan organization of the Noh Jats or their standards of high farming. In Sahpau the village communities crumbled. The alienation statements show 'the frightful extent to which the hereditary zamindars have been supplanted',[29] the majority of the alienations occurring in the twenty-five years between 1833 and the Mutiny. The result was 'the replacement of the hereditary yeomen...by a body of grasping traders and speculators who are not connected with the soil by ancient traditions, and who look upon the land merely as good investment for their capital'. But it is clear from the population figures that Jats were not strongly settled here (they were but 11 per cent of the population in 1872 as against some 53 per cent in Noh Jhil). The major losses during the 1833 settlement were borne by the Rajput communities, much as in parganas Hathras and Khair, to the advantage principally of non-resident Brahmin classes. In pargana Sadabad the position was different. Here the Jats formed the largest caste (some 28 per cent) and still were the most considerable landowners in 1873 (when they held 36 per cent), but the fact that they retained 73 per cent

of the total *sir* or demesne lands, as against Brahmins 12 per cent and Thakurs 11 per cent, suggests their losses at some stage had been heavy. McConaghey, the settlement officer in 1873, inferred that the damage had largely been done during the first few years of British rule when Raja Bhagwant Singh of Mursan had been set aside and the revenue engagements taken with the village communities, who then proved unequal to the task of management. By 1873 just under half the land was in the possession of non-resident owners, half again of which can be identified as belonging to non-agricultural classes, Brahmins, banias, and Dhusars.[30]

Sahpau and Sadabad parganas were disturbed in May 1857 during that spontaneous, universal upsurge of anarchy that so flabbergasted Mark Thornhill, the Magistrate. In late June he was able to take punitive measures in the Sadabad area, but on his enforced withdrawal shortly afterwards 'all the country round Sadabad rose, headed by one Deokaran, and plundered the tahsil and police station'. This was a Jat rising, but its details are obsure.[31] Better known are the peasant rebellions in the Mahaban pargana, which Thornhill's description has made celebrated.[32] Between 1838 and 1857 some 32 per cent of the land in pargana Mahaban was subject to transfer the greater part going to strangers rather than other shares. McConaghey estimated that in 1808 the Jats held at least three-fourths of the parganas; by 1874 their possessions had been reduced to one-third, that is, a loss of a half. The chief gainers were Brahmins, who extended their possessions from roughly 16 per cent in 1808 to some 32 per cent by 1874, and also banias who acquired some 15 per cent. It is not possible to date these gains, and, since a further 25 per cent of the pargana was alienated between 1858 and 1874, the extent of Jat losses needs to be kept in proportion. Now it is true that many of the Brahmin acquisitions as in Sahpau went to the non-agricultural class in Mathura and other towns, but in Mahaban it would appear that the principal beneficiary was the Brahmin Pachauri family of Mahaban itself 'whose importance dates from the time of Puran Chand, whose son Mukand Singh and grandson Ballab Singh were tahsildars in this district'.[33] Ballab Singh was recorded as a loyalist in 1857 who 'accepted the tahsildarship of P^{h} Muhabun and with the aid of sowers he was authorized to raise managed to restore order in the P^{h} in his own estates'.[34] The Jats traditionally made provision for their Brahmin priest by the grant of land, and the Pachauri family had claims to gentility, unlike that of Jagdispur

(pargana Mahaban) or Salahpur Chandwara (pargana Sadabad) or Chhatari (pargana Mat), who advanced through moneylending.

After a punitive expedition to depose the celebrated Devi Singh of Tappa Raya who set himself up as raja and sacked the tahsil offices, it was possible to restore and maintain order in this and neighbouring parganas through the use of collaborating agents. Thornhill appointed Raja Pirthi Singh of the Jadon family of Awa, to the office of nazim of Sadabad,[35] while Raja Tikam Singh of Mursan was given charge of pargana Mahaban where he still retained rights as talukdar in the small taluks of Ar, Sonkh, and Madim. According to Thronhill the recipe of governing through the great landholders worked the charm: 'the position from perfect anarchy was brought to perfect order and the entire revenue collected' even in the absence of British authority, except from parganas Noh Jhil, Kosi, and part of Sahar.[36]

Here again then, in parganas Mahaban and perhaps Sadabad, the Jat colonies were too interspersed with magnate elements prepared to rally to the British to sustain a protracted resistance.

It should not be supposed, of course, that the traditional magnate class always rallied to the British. Where it did so, as in the person of the Mursan raja or the Lalkhani Bargujar house of Chhatari whose possessions spilled over from Bulandshahr into Aligarh district, one may reasonably assume that it had successfully adjusted itself to the novel conditions of landholding introduced by British rule. Such adjustment was far from automatic. It is a remarkable feature of the central Doab that, while on the Jumna side the magnates largely sided with the British, on the Ganges side they went over to the rebels. In some measure they were undoubtedly influenced by their proximity to the stronghold of rebellion across the Ganges in Rohilkhand and Oudh, with bridge-heads across the river at Farrukhabad and Kanpur; but this supplies no sufficient explanation of why the rajas of Etah and Mainpuri threw in their lot with the cause of revolt. A detailed examination would be out of place here, but a brief examination of Mainpuri district and a quick glance at Etah may offer some pointers.

Between 1840 and 1857 some 32 per cent of the cultivated areas of Mainpuri district changed hands, although the proportion lost by the original owners was probably nearer 25 per cent. The transfers effected, however, a much smaller displacement of caste. Rajputs, easily the largest

landholders, held 48 per cent of the villages in 1840 and still retained 44 per cent in 1870; while Brahmins rose from 14 per cent to 18 per cent and banias from $1^1/_2$ per cent to $3^1/_2$ per cent. The value of land remained low and the settlement officers concluded that it was only after 1858 that 'capitalists' entered the land market. Assuming that Brahmin and other gains could be accounted gains of the trading classes, during the whole term of settlement between 1840 and 1870 the latter rose no more than 10 per cent.[37] There would therefore seem to be little that was typical of the classical revolutionary situation in Mainpuri. Yet Tej Singh, the raja, declared against the British and actively participated in military operations against them.

It is usual to suppose that, as one of the most sorely stricken victims of the anti-magnate policy of the Thomasonian era of the 1840s, Tej Singh had every justification.[38] But, as we have seen in Aligarh, this policy by no means spelled disaster to the magnate class. There high cultivation and a high revenue demand had generated a quasi-commercial market in land titles, while at the same time part of the traditional elite had transformed itself into a successful magnate element and more than kept its footing alongside the trading classes.

Conditions were clearly different in Mainpuri district. Tej Singh did not hold sway over densely settled cultivating brotherhoods, as may be seen from the very low numbers of bhaiachara estates. The Rajputs while holding a half of the district as late as the 1870s formed but 8 per cent of the population, and constituted more of a gentry or 'sturdy yeoman' class. Absentee ownership was high, characterizing three-fourths of the villages, and cultivating proprietors worked only 14 per cent of the total cultivated area as *sir* or home farm, Rajputs holding some 7 per cent. Apart from the Raja of Mainpuri and the Raja of Eka (heading the Pratabner branch), the Chauhan Rajputs, who played the critical role in the 1857 rising, were most strongly entrenched in small estates in the fertile central tracts of the district. The question before 1857 was whether they could hold their traditionally dominant position against other Rajput clans as well as other castes. The evidence suggests that they were forced to give ground on the western side of the district while maintaining their hold elsewhere. In what became Mainpuri pargana in the central region, for instance, the Chauhan proprietary (outside the twenty-three villages owned by large landholders) jostled for room. Property was extensively subdivided owing to the number of shareholders who traditionally took to military

service to supplement their income. But no more than some 8 per cent of the cultivated area was subject to transfer, and the Rajputs still held 61 per cent (Chauhans 55 per cent) in 1879 as against 62 per cent in 1840. In Bhongaon pargana, further east, the transfer rate was higher, with about a quarter of the cultivation changing hands between 1840 and the rebellion, but the Rajput holdings remained steady from 1840 to 1870 at 39 per cent. The Brahmins increased their hold from 17 per cent to 25 per cent but mainly at the expense of the Kayaths and Lodhas. In Kishni pargana, bordering on Farrukhabad, the Chauhans in fact managed to increase their hold from 44 per cent to 50 per cent over the settlement period.

On the western side of the district the story was different. The Mustafabad pargana marched with Agra and Mathura districts. Over the settlement period Rajputs dropped from 53 per cent to 48 per cent, but Chauhan losses were more severe, their holdings falling from 46 per cent to 36 per cent. Even Brahmin holdings dropped slightly from 9 per cent to 8 per cent. The principal gainers were of the Marwari caste, a sure sign of intrusive commercial forces whose activity was so much more marked on the Yamuna side of the Doab. Transfers in this rich pargana ran extremely high, as much as 40 per cent of the land changing hands in a single decade between 1840 and 1850, while the revenue demand fell sharply on the cultivation at Rs 2–3–2.

In Ghiror pargana, which stood between Mustafabad and Mainpuri, the Chauhans had again suffered, losing land to the moneylending Rajput Jadon family of Awa and to Brahmins from Kanauj, mainly it seems before 1857.

The Chauhan Thakurs still form the largest body of proprietors although their possessions have been sadly curtailed since the commencement of our rule. The members of the Partabner branch have suffered most severely, and the splendid estates of Usnida, Pachawar, Karaoli, Harhai, half Himmatpur, and Nahal Katengra with its six subordinate villages have passed away from them for ever for a mere song, before they were thoroughly acquainted with the rigid working of our system. It is distressing to see such men reduced to the position of cultivators when they might have been saved by more careful and lenient treatment. The Jadon Kunwars of Awa and Chaudhri Jai Chand of Binsiya now own their ancestral properties and are their masters.[39]

British officials later took the view that there was no mass rising of the agricultural community in Mainpuri as in Mathura district, but rather

a struggle for the mastery between two landholding castes, the Chauhans and the Ahirs.

In this District there seems to have been no such thing as a national attempt at the subversion of the Government authority. No sooner did the mutiny commence, the Ahir tribe resumed their predatory habits and were followed by the Chowhan Rajpoots...All restraints were cast off and every malcontent found an opportunity for avenging old wrongs or recovering former possessions. Then followed the struggle for the mastery between the two tribes, and ended in the subversion of the Ahirs by the Chowhans. It was owing in great measure to these incessant commotions that so many estates were ruined, and the prevalence of anarchy and suspension of authority were prolonged for so long a period.[40]

On this western side of the district, opposing the British presence at Agra, rebellion presented a ragged front. There was no clean division among the major caste groups; instead they fractured internally into collaborating and hostile elements. The Ahirs of Bharaul in Shikohabad pargana successfully repulsed Tej Singh, the Mainpuri raja, while their caste brethren, Ram Ratan and Bhagwati Singh of Rampur village, 'kept the whole pergunnah [of Mustafabad] in a state of rebellion and fought against British rule'.[41] Similarly, on Tej Singh's behalf 'the famous Ristee Ram of Khynuggur...with Soondar Singh, his uncle, headed several marauding expeditions into Furozabad and Moostufabad which contributed in no small degree to the anarchy and disorder which prevailed in these Perghunnahs'. Yet other Chauhans of Mustafabad pargana remained faithful to the politics of collaboration. It is noticeable that those like the Uresar family under Kunwar Gajadhar who 'did good services during the mutiny' were also those who had been 'more provident' than their Chauhan caste brethren and 'succeeded in retaining their ancestral land intact'. Bijai Singh, head of the Milauli family, was a similar 'shrewd and intelligent native gentleman, who, while most of his fellow caste-men were squandering away their hereditary lands, has succeeded in amassing considerable wealth and in acquiring fresh property'.[42]

It is against this background of Chauhan fearfulness for their traditional dominance, that Tej Singh's defection from the steadfast fealty of his ancient house to the British Raj must be judged. Apparently nature and circumstance had not lent him the capacity of adjustment that magnates nearer the Yamuna (Jumna) displayed. Edmonstone's picture of the Mainpuri house in 1840 as sunk in illiteracy, incompetence, and corruption was a loaded one, but even a more favourable view would hardly suggest

the dynasty had bred up a race of improving landlords. The talukdari sub-settlement struck an irretrievable blow. Although framed on terms similar to those of the Mursan raja in Aligarh, it had far less favourable results. It appears to have left the raja heavily dependent on his talukdari income rather than that derived from the small number of his estates recognised in full zamindari. Devoid of commercial aptitude or opportunity his position necessarily rested on his powers of lordship, of which he was deliberately stripped. He was left to draw his malikana from the district treasury and at a blow lost all power in intervene in 133 out of his 184 villages. Given the fact that his estates were situated in the portion of the district least given to cash-crop farming with lower transfer and lower revenue rates, there was little prospect of his riding the blow.[43]

The Etah raja, Dambar Singh, was similarly placed. He was left with but 19 of his 147 estates in zamindari possession, and from the rest was given what appeared to be a generous malikana of 29 per cent. Yet by 1852–3 he was being compelled to mortgage 97 villages, so serious was his financial disarray.[44] When the British were evicted from the district in June 1857 he faltered into rebellion. Etah was again a comparatively backward region with a relatively low standard of agriculture. It too presented no favourable milieu for the emergence of an enterprising magnate element able to adapt successfully in face of the institutional pressures being exerted against the old forms of lordship. As we have seen elsewhere, it was the presence or absence of such an element that appears to have been critical in determining political allegiance in 1857. In large areas of Mathura and Aligarh districts it was able not merely to hold down tumultuous peasant revolt but to forward valuable sums in land revenue to the beleaguered British authorities in Agra. Where it had failed to emerge and a declining, aggrieved aristocracy held sway, districts smarting much less severely from the economic and social dislocation of British rule could be carried into rebellion.

NOTES

1. *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the N.W. Province*, ed. E. T. Atkinson (hereafter referred as *Gazetteer N.W.P.*) II, pt I, p. 390.

2. *Report on the Settlement of the Muttra District N.W.P.*, by R. S. Whiteway (Allahabad, 1879) (hereafter cited as *Muttra S. R.*), p. 25.

3. *Settlement Report of the Ganges Canal Tract of the Muzaffarnagar District* (Allahabad, 1878), by A. Cadell, pp. 10 ff.

4. *Gazetteer N. W. P.*, IV, pp. 386 ff.

5. S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies* (Calcutta, 1957), p. 21. S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty Seven* (Calcutta, 1957), pp. 32–5.

6. *Aligarh Settlement Report* (Allahabad, 1882), para 182, p. 65.

7. See E. Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj* (London, 1978), pp. 178–9.

8. Ibid., p. 149.

9. M. C. Pradhan, *The Political System of the Jats of Northern India* (Bombay, 1966).

10. W. H. Smith in *Aligarh S.R.*, para. 55, p. 19.

11. *Selections from the Records of Govt. N.W. Provinces: Mr Thomason's Despatches* (Calcutta, 1856) i, pp. 19 ff.

12. Cited ibid., para. 335, p. 118.

13. For Mursan settlement, see Thornton's report in *Allygurh Statistics* by J. Hutchinson (Rurkse, 1854).

14. Smith, *Aligarh S.R.*, paras 186–7, pp. 67–8.

15. Smith, *Aligarh S.R.*, para. 340, p. 119. For sales resulting from indigo debts, Revenue Despatch to India, 13 Aug. 1851, India and Bengal Despatches, Vol. 72/IOR E/4/811. Also N. W. Provinces Board of Revenue Proceedings, 10 Nov. 1840, no. 12; 16 Oct. 1840, nos 21–2.

16. W. J. Bramley, Maigstrate Aligarh, to A. Cocks, Special Commissioner, 17 Nov. 1858; cited S. A. A. Rizvi (ed.), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh* (Lucknow, 1957–61), V, pp. 868 ff.

17. Smith, *Aligarh S. R.*, para. 55, p. 19; para. 72, pp. 24–5. *Gazetteer N.W.P.*, (ed.), Atkinson, II, pt i, p. 509.

18. S. A. A. Rizvi (ed.), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, V, pp. 668, 686.

19. Bramely to Cocks, 17 Nov. 1858, para. 10, cited *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, V, pp. 658–9.

20. *Aligarh S. R.*, para. 250, p. 85.

21. Smith, *Aligarh S. R.*, para. 88, p. 31.

22. Cf. B. H. Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community* (London, 1986), pp. 281 ff.

23. *Muttra S. R.*, by R. S. Whiteway, p. 251.

24. Ibid., p. 249. For Best's comments, J. R. Best to G. F. Harvey, 8 Dec. 1858; Post-Mutiny Records, Com. (Agra) Revenue 1859, bundle 2 (ii), File no. 35. U.P. State Archives, Allahabad.

25. Mark Thornhill to W. Muir, Sec. to Govt., 15 Nov. 1858; Post-Mutiny Records, Com. (Agra) Judicial I (iii), File 49 (File 126/1 1857).

26. Henry Vansittart to Muir, 28 Aug. 1858; ibid., Com. (Agra) Revenue 1859, bundle 2 (ii), File 35.

27. *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, v, pp. 686, 691. Also Vansittart to Muir, 2 Oct. 1858; Com. (Agra) Judicial I File 2/1857.

28. *Gazetteer N. W. P.* (ed.), Atkinson, viii (Allahabad, 1884), p. 127.

29. M. A. McConaghey in *Muttra S. R.*, p. 129.

30. *Muttra S. R.*, p. 138; *Gazetteer N. W. P.*, viii, p. 227.

31. Mark Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Indian Mutiny*, 1884, pp. 102 ff.

32. *Muttra S. R.*, p. 155.

33. Statement of persons who have rendered valuable services to Govt. dated 19 May 1858, signed J. R. best; Com. (Agra) Judicial I 1857, File I.

34. *Muttra S. R.*, p. 31.

35. Prithi Singh is a representative figure of a new entrepreneurial magnate class emerging from the ranks of the traditional elite. By the 1880s the rajas of Awa's estates were 'reputed to be among the wealthiest in Upper India', paying some Rs 3,75,000 in revenue; *Gazetteer N. W. P.*, VIII, p. 72, and *Aligarh S. R. 1882*, para. 7, p. 25. For services in Rebellion, G. Couper to officiating Commissioner, Agra, 2 Mar. 1859; Com. (Agra) Revenue Dept. 1860, bundle 3 (ii), File 40.

36. M. Thornhill to W. Muir, Sec. to Govt. 15 Nov. 1858, *Gazetteer N. W. P.*, VIII, p. 170.

37. *Mainpuri S. R.* (Allahabad, 1875), pp. 17, 51–2.

38. Cf. J. W. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, II, 1864, pp. 161 ff.

39. *Mainpuri S. R.*; p. 145.

40. E. J. Boldero, Collector, to W. H. Lowe, Sec. Sudder Board of Revenue, 17 Dec. 1858; Com. (Agra) Revenue 1859, bundle 2 (ii), File 35.

41. Report by H. Chase, Joint Magistrate, 27 May 1859; Com. (Agra) Rev. Dept. 67/I of 1859, bundle 2 (iii). File no. 44.

42. *Mainpuri Settlement Report*, p. 61. Also G. E. Lance, Officiating Collector to G. F. Harvey, Commissioner Agra, 1 Feb. 1859; N. W. provinces Political Proceedings, 10 Mar. 1859, no. 147.

43. Tej Singh's defection was also prompted by personal factors. The young raja had been installed in 1851, but his right to succeed was disputed by his uncle, Bhawani Singh, whose appeal was pending before the Privy Council at the outbreak of revolt. Tej Singh was reputed weak and dissolute, and had been placed under check by A. H. Cocks, the district officer. Bhawani Singh was thought to have been loyal, but informed official opinion in the district later came to the conclusion that he had persuaded Tej Singh to revolt and then played a clever double game. See on the question *District Gazetteer of United Provinces*, X, *Mainpuri*, (ed.), E. R. Neave (Allahabad, 1910), pp. 174–5. Also N.W.P. Pol. Progs. 13 May 1859, no. 116; 11 Aug. 1850, nos 68, 69, 24 Sept. 1850, nos 199, 218. For the financial position of the Mainpuri raja compared with the Mursan raja, see N. W. P. Pol. Progs., 13 May 1859, nos 116, 119; 1 Sept. 1859, nos 12, 13; 8 June 1861, no. 29. Also N. W. P. Rev. Progs., 18 July 1842, no. 3, cited *Parliamentary Papers, 1857–8*; XLII, pp. 297 ff.

44. Com. (Agra) Judicial I (ii) 1857, file 13. Statement of Debts filed on Estates of Raja Dambar Singh.

Eric Stokes and the Uprising of 1857*

C. A. Bayly

The study of Indian agrarian history occupied the best part of Eric Stokes's working life. *The English Utilitarians and India* (1959) contained much that related to English political thought and the study of Indian government: themes to which he returned in his last published paper. And while working on the 1857 Rebellion he made frequent forays into the realm of comparative colonial history or theories of imperialism. Yet Stokes returned again and again to the peasant world of India by whose colour and vitality he had been enthralled during the War when serving as a subaltern in the Indian Mounted Artillery. It is not surprising that during the years 1963–80, while he gathered material for *The Peasant Armed*, his perceptions of the key issues changed considerably. He claimed sometimes that he was 'ploughing a lonely furrow' in wrestling with the complexities of Indian tenurial forms, but being an acute historiographer himself, Stokes was keenly aware of changes of mood and interest among his students and colleagues. Relishing the debate more than the definitive statement, most of the essays he collected in *The Peasant and the Raj* (1978) and in the present volume were attempts to find solutions to problems, to respond to the ideas of other historians, rather than guides to the general reader or expositions of a final position. It is this that gives the work its allusive, even paradoxical quality. While Stokes could write with breadth and verve, as witness his review articles in the *Times Literary Supplement*, the chapters and essays on the Rebellion were written with a sterner purpose: to alert colleagues and students to the complexity and variability of social movements in an ancient agrarian society. Here Stokes the wrangler disciplined Stokes the stylist.

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One key theme was never modified. The Indian Rebellion of 1857 was not one movement, be it a peasant revolt or a war of national liberation; it was many. The lineaments of revolt differed vastly from district to district, even village to village, and were determined by a complex counterpoint reflecting ecology, tenurial forms, and the variable impact of the colonial state. That this appears obvious now is only because Stokes's ideas have been absorbed into the historical record. When he began writing, it was still fashionable to seek overarching characteristics. Agrarian movements were classified as 'traditional' or 'post-pacification', while revolt was attributed to whole classes such as the 'rich peasant', the 'middle peasant', or the 'traditional aristocracy'. But while Stokes never abandoned his concern for a sense of place, for the local specificity of revolt, the categories which he used to describe and analyse these events were gradually modified. He himself pointed to one such development—his gradual abandonment of the notion that caste groups in themselves were appropriate basic units of analysis of the revolt. This is a good place to begin, for the role of caste has been a great source of confusion, especially for those who are not specialists in Indian history.

When Stokes started work on the Rebellion, analysis of Indian history and politics in terms of great regional unities of caste (Rajputs, Bhumihar Brahmins, Jats, and so on) was in vogue in the West. This trend was itself part of an attempt to break away from history written with great men as actors and from history which attempted to force Indian reality into simplistic class categories drawn from Western societies. Indians themselves, it was thought, were loath to consider these important issues because to them 'casteism' was derogatory to Indian nationhood, a machiavellian ploy of the colonial power. The caste categories into which the *Imperial Gazetteers* had carved Indian society were accordingly dropped when the new Republic produced its own gazetteers. In the great rush of Indian writing which accompanied the centenary of the Rebellion in 1957, caste was hardly mentioned, except in a descriptive sense, while the history of nationalism was still written in terms of 'middle classes'.

The aim in the early 1960s was to construct a modern history of India in which social categories relevant to Indian society replaced great men. Contemporary anthropological work on India which concerned caste systems was enlisted. A vast mass of source material existed in the *District Gazetteers* and *Settlement Reports* of the nineteenth century and this also provided fascinating social detail to fill out the history of events drawn

from *Parliamentary Papers* or memoires. For this reason, Stokes's early essays on the Rebellion, particularly his 'Walidad Khan' (*The Peasant and the Raj*, chapter 6), mount an interpretation which takes broadly defined caste and communal groups as the constituencies in which leaders and aristocrats worked out their response to the collapse of British power. Here the main contenders were Afghan Muslims and Hindu Rajputs. Edward I. Brodkin, who completed his doctoral dissertation under Stokes, took the argument further. He argued that the clashes in the western tract of Rohilkhand during 1857 were not necessarily anti-British. All that happened was that conflicts which arose as a result of the disparities between more recently settled Afghan and older Rajput lords under the Company erupted into local fights for succession to British rule. These communities were later perceived as loyal or rebellious largely because it was the Afghans who moved first and seemed therefore to offer the more direct challenge to the waning British power.[1]

Stokes never abandoned caste categories as descriptive labels for the groups he wished to discuss. But much of his later work was directed to modifying and refining his original bald view that whole regional castes were the basic units of analysis. Here again developments outside his immediate area of historiography informed and stimulated the response. Anthropologists in Britain and America were themselves moving away from the monolithic view of caste. E. R. Leach, for instance, argued that since caste was a system of ritual and social interdependencies at village level, caste conflict was a misperception.[2] In the later 1960s and early 1970s, the multi-caste faction became the centre of attention in both history and sociology. Sometimes, as in the work of A. D. Carter,[3] these factions were seen to have a material basis in the disposition of resources; sometimes, as in the analyses of Ralph Nicholas and Ronald Inden,[4] cultural bonds were regarded as supreme. But empirical research had clearly refuted the old, simple model. Eric Stokes's work both reflected and informed this new approach, for the faction made up of several castes made its debut both in his own work and in that of his younger colleagues working on the politics of Indian nationalism. Detailed work on the Delhi area which he completed after visiting India in 1975–6 seemed to prove the vacuousness of the broad caste categories. In some parts of his study area, for instance, the large regional caste group designated Jat made up 80 per cent of the population; in other places, less than 20 per cent. Moreover Jats were found on both 'sides' during the revolt. Reconstructing

the history of 1857 from later *Settlement Reports*, it seemed to Stokes that the key groups here were multi-caste factions (*dharras*). These were made up of Jat 'pioneer' peasants who had settled in different waves during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries supported by groups of clients from other similar castes or by agricultural dependents. Thus the supra-caste faction was the basic unit of organization during 1857. The motives for revolt were to be found in the issue of relative 'material deprivation' (a problem which will be considered later). In this case the Jat village controllers and their non-Jat allies who had profited from the opening of the East Jumna Canal remained quiet. The Jat-led multi-caste faction located in the 'thirsty', unirrigated tracts to the west who had suffered from high revenue assessments were the ones who revolted.

[There was a slow]... modification of the notion that caste was the key category of revolt or, in any simple sense, the basic unit of Indian rural society. Take the case of the Gujars, a semi-nomadic caste of cattle-keepers, pastoralists, and petty cultivators living in a wide swathe of country from eastern Rajasthan through to the upper Doab. Many colonial officials classed the Gujars as a criminal tribe because of their supposed addiction to plunder and they were disposed to see the 1857 Rebellion in its civil aspect as a conspiracy to loot hatched by the 'dregs of society'. It is of course true that Gujars and other elements which went to make up the groups of casual labourers living around British military cantonments were sometimes at the forefront of looting once the police and the military had disintegrated. But the notion that the Gujars were the prime force for revolt in the west of the region had much more to do with the desire of officialdom to preserve the reputation of the 'sturdy' Jat peasant farmer who was being groomed for the role of late Victorian development agent in the area. Gujar magnates and villages—especially those beginning to settle to secure agriculture—held aloof from revolt while those Gujars who did plunder were as much a menace to the lines of supply of the insurgents and the King of Delhi as they were to British communications.

Stokes came to make a further set of important qualifications regarding the role of caste in the case of the Rajputs, the classic royal warrior category of north India. At best, Rajputs were a broad grouping of endogamous castes with lifestyle and perceived status alone as common features. But even the basic endogamous groups within the Rajput category (sub-castes such as the Bais or Baghel Rajputs) could not form the basic unit of analysis in the revolt. This was because there was an important distinction

between those Rajputs who fulfilled a distant, lordly role in the villages, and those who were village-level magnates or actual cultivators, controlling production in closely knit and densely settled brotherhoods. The lordly category of Rajput *rentiers* existed where the land was rich enough to support a class of rent receivers, and also where Mughal and post-Mughal regimes had selected out and maintained them as allies in rural society. Consequently their status as rajas and their right to share in the profits of superior land-revenue management were recognized by the overlords. Conversely, where the land was poorer or recent settlement was of the pioneer peasant sort, Rajputs had often been reduced to no more than a rural cultivating caste with vague pretensions to gentry status. Some of them were even prepared to plough themselves (a sign of discredit to their lordly caste-fellows) or to marry outside the limits of caste and clan with a variety of other equivalent or lower cultivating communities. During the Rebellion, as Stokes implies and as Thomas R. Metcalf has fully demonstrated in his *Land, Landlords and the British Raj*, the lordly Rajput stratum split raggedly between 'loyalists' and 'rebels', with many hedging their bets until the last possible moment. Sometimes, though not always, British treatment of a particular estate or family in the immediate past explained the stance of individual magnates. Sometimes old conflicts with the Oudh or other rebel courts seems to have dictated their 'loyalty'. Again many were attracted to the cause of the Mughal or the King of Oudh, but helped individual British officers to escape and so insured themselves against the possibility of eventual British success.

The Rajput brotherhoods living close to the soil, and especially those communities inhabiting dry or poorly irrigated lands along the ravine-ridden banks of the great rivers or the dry tracts of the north-west, were more likely to revolt. They had suffered particularly badly from heavy British revenue demands since 1818 and as a result had lost great blocks of land rights in distress sales in settlement of arrears of revenue. Isolated as they often were from the lines of communication which served exporters of cash crops, they had found little to admire in British rule. In his early writings on these embattled brotherhoods, Stokes tended to suggest that material loss was the cause of revolt. But later, imponderables such as loss of honour, the withdrawal of richer groups from ancient patterns of marriage alliance, or the destruction of traditional marks of rank and status by the ruthlessly utilitarian colonial government became more important

in his analysis. Even so, one should stress that as far as pre-conditions were concerned, Stokes remained quite clear of the primacy of the material environment as the basic condition determining the incidence and nature of revolt. In his last two or three years of work, in fact, he increasingly stressed the role of ecology as the fundamental explanatory variable of Indian rural society. Caste, culture, 'mentalities' all seemed to him to refer back ultimately to the fickle agricultural environment of the north Indian plains. The great variety and divisions within the response of the caste groups, to which he had once attributed primacy, now seemed to derive more and more from the forms of production which underlay them. So Rajput and other village brotherhoods were predisposed to revolt because the 'thirsty' tracts in which they lived could not support a rapacious revenue demand. Similarly, pastoralist Gujars were more likely to revolt than their agriculturalist caste-fellows because expanding assent agriculture fuelled by better communications and patchy advances in irrigation was cutting into their ancestral gazing grounds and tending to depress their social status. [...] The revolt was fiercest in the poor, predominantly Rajput, communities that lived on the banks of the river Jumna or away from the Grand Trunk Road.[5] In general, the more secure landlords and tenants who had prospered through access to the road and the markets of the small towns along it remained quiet even when the British military presence was withdrawn.

Here another element in Stokes's analysis fits into place. Although the role of personal commitment, of loyalty and honour was never denied, he did see a connection between a predisposition to help the Raj or acquiesce in its authority and the degree to which different elements in the magnate class had benefited from the export trades and limited commercialization which had come in alongside colonialism. Those among the gentry and aristocracy who had adapted better to commercial change and who had preserved their incomes even at the expense of loss of land rights tended to pit their dependants or scratch forces against the rebels. This was one condition which mapped out the wider geography of revolt. The British never really lost control of the Benares Division in the east or the Grand Trunk Road (a crucial military artery) because this new magnate category was more firmly established in the east and along the lines of communication. Civil rebellion was thus from the beginning a revolt of the hinterland; in the hinterland, it could survive long after

the revolt of the sepoys, the cities, and riverain tracts had been suppressed. But by the same token it could only fitfully challenge the main artery of British power which lay between Delhi and Calcutta.

While the outline is firm, the nature of this new magnate element is less clear in the surviving writings. According to Stokes, this was a group of notables drawn in the main from the traditional (that is, eighteenth-century) ruling groups, such as Rajputs, Bhumihar Brahmins, and Jats. He does not see it as a token of the rise of inferior social groups, though merchants such as Manik Chand of Phulpur in Allahabad and the Seths of Muttra, who raised armies to aid the British, were exceptions to this rule. (Manik Chand was unusual enough to receive the nickname of 'fighting *bania*' for his efforts in defence of the Phulpur treasury, while the Seths who helped supply and maintain the British at Agra were *nouveaux riches* who had prospered by British office-holding since the turn of the century.) In general, though, the new magnates were new by virtue of their capacity to adapt. They had kept close contacts with British revenue officers, had consolidated their holdings, or had simply happened to prosper because they had done well in the indigo, sugar, or opium booms which had passed temporarily across the plains since 1815. Most often, Stokes implies, the new magnates were efficient managers, who were unencumbered by ancient and well-established interests among the tenantry or had driven away high-caste tenants in order to supplant them with more tractable dependants whose rents could be squeezed up. What these men were *not* capitalist farmers; there is no implication that their production methods—as opposed to their methods of rental and revenue management—were novel, or that the basic family farm unit of peasant agriculture had been modified on their estates. It would be worth pointing out a!so that many of the new magnates who acted to protect British interests during the revolt had begun their rise to power before the onset of British rule as farmers of land revenue or military and administrated servants of pre-British regimes. In the Benares Division and in Allahabad, for instance, the British retained the support of the (predominantly Bhumihar Brahmin) magnates who had consolidated their power in the eighteenth century under the aegis of the Maharaja of Benares. These men had been entrepreneurs in revenue-farming and retained close connections with Indian merchants and moneylenders in Benares who had accumulated money in the sugar and cotton trades. The magnates did not, however, transform the agricultural methods of

their domains and by the later nineteenth century they had become a stagnant weight on the impoverished agricultural economy of the eastern districts. In this region, by contrast, the Rebellion gained particular support from closely packed, high-caste communities of peasant landholders, such as the Monas Rajputs of the Bhadchi area.[6] These groups had progressively lost ground to the new magnates since the 1740s and were in no position to benefit either from British revenue courts or from the more integrated markets which colonial rule brought into being.

Eric Stokes stressed the role of the new magnate element because it was they alone who were able to protect British interests in a district when the sepoys had mutinied and the police disintegrated. And where powerful magnates did exist 'they were the effective decision-makers', for it was they who had the power to punish and subdue recalcitrant village communities or to provide artillery and some degree of military organization where interest or sentiment caused them to throw their weight behind the Rebellion. Where no such magnate element existed, groups of rebellious villages almost always tried to crate an overarching structure of authority either by calling in the forces of one of the famous rebel leaders from a nearby area or by designating some local gentleman raja or viceroy of the Delhi emperor. Some supra-village authority was crucial both for the British and for the successor regimes because without it no revenue could be collected. What Stokes never argued was that the rebellion itself was élitist in character or that larger magnates merely manipulated an inert peasant mass; only a superficial reading could suggest this. Even where a new magnate element existed, it was often nearly overwhelmed by autonomous revolt in the villages over the first few weeks of the revolt. In some cases, especially in Oudh, the pressure of village opinion seems to have pressed otherwise cautious magnates into revolt. And besides, over much of the countryside, no superior landed élite had come to exist or had survived the political changes of the late eighteenth century. The organization of civil rebellion thus often devolved on the village leadership of factions and extended kinship groups of the peasant landholders.

From his earliest essays through to the very title of this book, Stokes emphasized the fact that the Rebellion of 1857 was in a significant sense a peasant revolt. What he was not prepared to accept was that 'peasants' were universally a downtrodden mass whose interests ran wholly against those of north Indian landlords or that the Rebellion was a class revolt

in any simple sense. 'Peasant' for him was not an emotive slogan but a sociological term which conveyed only part of the reality of the social situation of those who revolted in 1857. Both the petty landholders of Rajput and Bhumihar Brahmin caste, and the Gujar petty cultivators and pastoralists who played such a forward part in different parts of the Provinces were, in a sense, peasants. But in status, function, and culture, there were enormous differences between them. In many situations, these segments of rural society found themselves of different sides in the revolt. In fact, the upper levels of the peasantry had some features which made them more akin to a debased gentry than to the classic peasant family farmer. [... The] peasant landholders, had become cultivators only under the pressure of demographic expansion. This broke up their original rental holdings generation by generation, until they were forced to turn for livelihood to the profits of agriuclture carried on either by their dependants, or in the final extremity by their own hands and those of their families. Their old political rights in the villages and their toehold in the revenue-rent structure were crucial not only for additional income but because these were the features that actually distinguished them from the mass of peasant society. Similarly the role of members of many of these communities in the East India Company's Bengal Army was a flimsy guarantee of status and income drawn from outside the village. These were not peasant communities in a simple sense; true, they directed cultivation on tiny plots. But culturally their quasi-gentry status marked them off from the mass of the villagers.

Not only were many rural people who took part in the revolt in 1857 not peasants in the strict definition of the word, but peasants, like the bourgeoisie in the English Civil War, according to Tawney, fought on both sides. No general categorization into rich, middle, or poor throws light on the situation. While in the eastern districts, the 'peasantized' gentry of Rajput and Brahmin was a source of revolt, in Muzaffarnagar and Meerut to the west, one of the few area where a recognizable rich peasantry had come into being before 1857, this stratum split on the lines of old factional alignments and of specific local differences in relative affluence which even contemporaries found hard to fathom. During the revolt, no rhetoric of land redistribution or cry for the modification of the rental system took hold, and social millenarian themes of entry into a promised age were very muted by comparison with near-contemporary events such as the Taiping Rebellion in China or the Java War. India in the early

nineteenth century did throw up social movements directed specifically against the landowning structure, as witness the riots of 1859 in Bengal or the themes which emerged among the Muslim tenantry who participated in the Faraizi movement or the Moplah outbreaks in Malabar. As early as 1866, significant tension between the large magnates of Oudh and their tenants was reported in the very areas which threw up the Rebellion of 1857. But these were not major themes in the Rebellion itself. Peasants were prime movers in the disturbances in many places, but anti-landlordism or conflict with an emerging class of rich peasants hardly features in the evidence.

If 1857 was not a peasant rebellion in the sense of a rebellion for peasants as a class, how far was it a popular rebellion? Eric Stokes would also have found this characterization problematic. Individuals and groups certainly displayed fierce loyalty to the Mughal emperor and the King of Oudh. There was a widespread distrust of and dislike of the British, who were felt to be undermining religion, both Hindu and Muslim. But all Stokes's researches in the Delhi area and western UP confirmed him in the view that the countryside did not 'rise up as one man'. Even in Rohilkhand and Farukhabad district, where there had been revulsion against the imposition of British rule and serious revolts in 1816 and 1817, the Mutiny broke down into a series of conflicts between town and country, artisan and merchant, Muslim gentry and Hindu landholder. In the immediate environs of Delhi where the influence of the Mughal empire might have been greatest, the imperial forces never established a liberated area, and revolt fragmented into factions which can best be related to differences in their material and political fate under Company rule.

Oudh, annexed only eighteen months before the rebellion, may have been a different case.[7] The lack of consideration of this region in Stokes's published works is one of the great lacunae, particularly in view of the interest afforded it by officials after the Rebellion and its later history of peasant militancy. His views on the rebellion in Oudh are set out in a paragraph or two in *The Peasant and the Raj* and they can be derived also from undergraduate papers he supervised. [...] The revolt, he may well have concluded, was certainly more popular and widespread in character in Oudh than it was further west. Over large areas of the country every village produced men who fought in the rebel armies. This was why the British advance towards Lucknow in the last few months of 1857 was so slow and painful. But in conceding that the revolt was popular in the

sense of being very general, Stokes would have hesitated to give the impression that it was popular as opposed to 'élite', or that it was a unified patriotic or proto-nationalist upsurge. The villagers who opposed British arms house by house appear on closer examination to have been those same high-caste, village-controlling brotherhoods whose privileges had been threatened by the changes in the Bengal army to which they flocked in large numbers before 1856. If there is evidence that the great magnates were often pushed into revolt by their following, the following in question appears to have been not the ordinary tenant or the low castes so much as the embattled yeoman of the big villages.

Revolt in Oudh was nearly as particularist in character and as localized in form as it was elsewhere. The difference is that the British occupation was brutal and sudden here, whereas in the North-Western Provinces older structures of authority and potential centres of revolt had been slowly eroded, while a class of new magnates, more committed to colonial rule, had emerged. In southern Oudh, the village proprietors were enlisted in revolt by their sepoy brethren and by the effects of the Temporary Revenue Settlement of Martin Gubbins which required them to remit revenue to government when they had neither the resources nor the social power to do so. Around Lucknow and its Muslim small-town satellites, the insult to the Court of Oudh and its banishment to Calcutta alongside the disbanding of the King's 60,000 strong army bred fierce resentment. In the semi-cultivated areas of northern Oudh, different grievances rankled. The old magnates resented the loss of their fortresses and political rights which they had guarded jealously against the intervention of the Lucknow authorities. But their response was circumspect. Many held off from revolt until the summer months were nearly over and there seemed some chance that the British might lose. Others only reacted *after* British armies had invaded Oudh and the force of the colonial state appeared for the first time near their domains. Many made pragmatic local settlements with the victorious colonial regime, disarming their peasant supporters as efficiently as they had drawn them into revolt months earlier. For none of these elements was material deprivation unimportant, yet for none of them was it merely a question of economic loss. The payment of tribute to the sovereign was a token of allegiance, just as the building of a fortress was a mark of status and independence. It is wholly anachronistic to argue that Metcalf or Stokes are too 'economistic' in their approach to the causes of revolt.[8]

Contemporaries would not have been able to make a distinction between the 'ideological' and the 'economic': for a king needed wealth to display his glory, while a trooper needed employment to maintain his family and his commitment to true religion.

A finished manuscript of *The Peasant Armed* might also have turned to the question of popular revolt in the towns, and in particular, to the role of Islam. Initially, Eric Stokes affected a humorous disdain for the 'city slickers' among his colleagues who refused to get village mud on their academic boots. There were no more than a few references, for instance, to what the British called 'the low Muhammadan rabble' which was an active element of revolt in towns such as Koil (Aligarh). But in time the towns as seats of rebellion, or centres of the commercial classes who supplied the British with grain and money bulked larger in his work [...] [U]rban rebellion in the west of the region seems to have been an important link between the military Mutiny and peasant revolt. The British commander failed to follow up the sepoys on the road to Delhi after the first outbreak at Meerut because he was wrong-footed by urban mobs composed of so-called criminal tribes and discontented artisans who attacked the civil lines and cantonments, putting the European population in jeopardy. This happened elsewhere, so that the difficulty of keeping an eye on mutinous sepoys as well as hostile city crowds cramped the British military response and allowed revolt to take fire in the countryside.

In many centres artisans and in particular Muslim weavers, took a leading part in revolt and pillage, though not necessarily on the rebel 'side'. Some of these weaving communities were influenced by the teachings of Muslim, purist movements and especially the erroneously named 'Wahhabis' who followed the preachings of Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly, instigator of a revolt against the Sikhs on the north-west frontier in the 1820s. Here we encounter one major gap in Stokes's account of 1857. Nowhere is there a sustained account of its ideological dimension, either at the élite or at the popular level. But it is clear that he was well aware of this dimension. Undergraduates reading his Cambridge special subject on the Rebellion wrote essays for him on the role of Islam and the ideology of the rebels. As early as 1968 his reading lists contained F. W. Buckler's essay of 1922 on 'The political theory of the Indian Mutiny'.[9] Buckler contended that in Muslim law it was the British not the Indians who were in revolt. For the British had recognized the sovereignty of the

Mughal emperor in various court rituals and were in theory still no more than the revenue collectors of Bengal, a position which they had occupied since 1765. Moreover, the British were schismatics since the Mughal was not merely a secular ruler, but regent of God on earth (*Khalifa*). When in 1848 the British refused to present ceremonial gifts to the Emperor they were repudiating this allegiance, a crime which they followed in 1856 with the usurpation of the lands of the Mughal's viceroy, the Vazir of Oudh. Bernard S. Cohn has recently incorporated Buckler's insight into his argument about the importance of ideology and kingship in the construction of the Indian social order.[10] Before establishing the Crown as the centre of Indian political life in 1858, he argues, the British were constrained to 'desacralize' the royal centre of Delhi and humiliate the Emperor with trial and deportation.

Buckler's argument cannot be dismissed, as his Anglo-Indian critics of 1922 tired to do, by arguing that Mughal authority had been dismantled in practice. His point is about theory and ideology and as such is an interesting and valid one. Some leading figures in the revolt did respond (as Stokes showed) to appeals from the Emperor, or used his authority to raise armed forces against the British. The plight of their sovereign and of the King of Oudh does appear to have impressed the wider populace, Sepoys converged on Delhi, for instance, when their best strategy would probably have been to spread the revolt outward as fast as possible. Instead they pressed in on the capital because they could only conceive the validity of their action in terms of Mughal authority. But the notion of imperial legitimacy is only of limited use in understanding the events of 1857. The influence of Lucknow or Delhi seems weak by comparison with the political obligations and economic interests generated within the little kingdoms of the localities. Many magnates like the Jat rajas near Delhi offered homage to the Emperor, but secretly communicated with the British forces encamped on the Delhi Ridge. The Jat position was, after all, historically ambiguous. Their rise to power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been as 'plunderers and rebels' who preyed on imperial lines of communication. An assertion of Mughal sovereignty would always have been a double-edged weapon.

Much the same can be said of the Islamic dimension. There is no doubt that a large body of Muslim learned men and members of the sufi mystical orders (especially Chishti Sabris and Naqshbandis)[11] participated in a revolt which they saw as a defence of their faith. Muslim fighters

staged heroic attacks on the British on the Ridge, while the *maulavis* of Allahabad and Faizabad were among the most popular leaders of revolt, drawing a strong response from artisans and petty landholders in some areas. But there were many reasons why the 1857 rebellion did not become a holy war, a jihad such as spread through contemporary western China or Africa. First, the learned were divided on the theological justification for holy war. Some argued that this was a secular revolt since the British had refrained from interference with Islam; others that since a key requirement of jihad was that it should be successful, and success was far from certain, a holy war would be illegitimate. There were in addition conflicts between various Islamic sects as to the proper leadership of such a campaign and concern, at least among the Delhi leaders, about the likely response of the Hindus. The social structure of Indian Islam was another important reason for the uncoordinated nature of the Muslim response. The great religious authorities were closely tied up with the Muslim landed classes. Muslims had lost land rights, and some revenue-free grants to religious institutions had been sequestrated by the British in the 1830s and 1840s. But their plight was nothing like as bad as post-Mutiny commentators such as W. W. Hunter thought. Indeed, many of the religious men were members of Muslim families which had made a relatively successful adaptation to the conditions of British rule. Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, later founder of the Aligarh Anglo-Oriental College, was one celebrated example. Stokes's narrative [...] makes it clear that it was the economic and political ties of members of Muslim learned families which inhibited their response to cries for holy war. Only in the vicinity of Thana Bhawan north of Delhi did the poverty of the petty gentry and a strong ideological impulse from local religious leaders of Naqshbandi sufi affiliation forge a truly Islamic response.

Yet if Stokes continued to doubt that appeals to any broad ideology overrode the particularistic loyalties and interests of the localities, he came increasingly to emphasize the importance of the contingent events of military action in his account of the incidence and spread of revolt. These factors could not simply be deduced from consideration of social and economic structures. A strong counter-attack from the 'history of events'—of narrative and personalities—which has long been rumoured along the networks of professional historians was already well established in his work. Not only was the broad area within which revolt occurred delineated by the disposition of European British troops and Sikhs,

Madrasis, and Gurkhas who showed no propensity to mutiny, but the spread of civil revolt within Hindustan was often determined by the actions of individual British officers. It is difficult of course to separate purely military considerations from social ones. Ultimately the failure of the Indian troops to take the British head on with bayonet charges against fixed positions reflected their inability to throw up an officer corps to replace the Europeans. On the other hand, the slow progress of the British through Oudh reflected the stubborn opposition of village *zamindars* and sepoys who were adept at sharpshooting guerrilla warfare. [...]

The contingent, almost accidental features of the revolt also help to explain the puzzle of its timing in relation to the longer-term trends in north Indian history which Stokes touched on elsewhere. Thus the Rebellion of 1857 does not seem to have reflected any 'conjunctural crisis' similar to those posited by French historians of the *Annales* school as arising from convergences in trends of prices, wags, and agricultural production. By 1857 the economy of the Ganges valley was evidently pulling out of the severe price depression of the 1830s and early 1840s, yet no sustained pattern of growth had emerged. Of course some local pressures generated by the expansion of the arable had been released in the west of the region where the herdsmen communities were coming up against pioneer peasant agriculture. It can also be argued that in a period of rising prices and greater activity, precariously based groups such as the high-caste brotherhood communities of Oudh and Benares were likely to come under greater pressure as their aversion to direct agricultural management put them at a disadvantage. But it is difficult to perceive any general trend of increased social tension in the years immediately preceding the Rebellion: Revolt and turbulence were endemic in Indian rural society, both before and after the colonial invasion, and if there was a period of more general tension, it was during the 1830s, not the 1850s. Perhaps indeed it was the very uneven pace of agrarian change, the very lack of strong general trends, which explains the fragmented and contradictory response of different sections of rural society to the crumbling of British military power in the summer of 1857.

Eric Stokes was similarly cautious about claiming too much for the Revolt. Its importance to him was that it revealed momentarily the structure of Indian rural society, not that it proved a universal and decisive turning-point in the history of British India. True, the legends of bravery and massacre informed the stiff manner of Victorian Anglo-India and were

later surreptitiously introduced into the ideology of Indian nationalism. The delegates to the first Indian National Congress ritually denounced the revolt as reactionary, but by the time of the 'extremist' movement of 1905–10, images of the rebellious Rani of Jhansi were being drawn in procession on floats during the Ramlila festival in north Indian cities. On the other hand, the British swing to the landlords after 1857 can be exaggerated, while the agrarian histories of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras were hardly influenced by events in north India. Curiously the experience of the Mutiny did not assume importance in any of Stokes's more extended writings on Indian history; here transport, prices, and population were the real actors. The rebellion was a brief marvel, a freak wave which suddenly revealed the depths of the ocean, not a flood tide. Like 1848 in Europe or the Taiping Rebellion in China, it was 'without issue'.

In sum Eric Stokes's analysis of the Revolt of 1857 seemed to be charting not a single explanatory variable, but a hierarchy of conditions. At the bottom was ecology which represented the *longue durée* of Indian agrarian history; above this clustered a whole range of social and economic forces which determined the propensity to revolt. But it was the specific decisions of British officers and Indian leaders which helped translate those propensities into historical action.

The Peasant Armed is incomplete and Stokes's overall arguments can only be fleetingly glimpsed in *The Peasant and the Raj*. But it is already clear that together they represent a major historical revision, and one which is typical of the work of British historians in the 1960s and 1970s. In its close empirical study of the conditions of agrarian society and its dense reasoning on the relationship between social pre-conditions and political action, the book is reminiscent of recent work on the English Civil War and English-language writing on the French Revolution. In all these cases, the discovery of complexity and paradox had the wider purpose of warning against the danger of monolithic or dogmatic constructions of the past. Eric Stokes was, of course, a consummate expounder of theory, as the *English Utilitarians* and occasional essays on imperialism showed. But where others have seen the poverty of theory, Stokes saw danger in its luxury. Stokes felt that history was generality 'a harmless pursuit' from which few general conclusions could emerge, as he once told an undergraduate historical society. His own view of political and social priorities derived not from historical theory but from a notion of natural law and from revealed religion. But it was important for him that the

historian should refrain from suppressing the specific, personal, and paradoxical in the interests of constructing some overarching argument or ideology. Otherwise this harmless jester might find itself serving at the court of more fearsome monarchs. [...]

NOTES

1. E. I. Brodkin, 'The struggle for succession: rebels and loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857', *Modern Asian Studies*, vi, 3 (1972).

2. E. R. Leach (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and N. W. Pakistan* (Cambridge, 1962).

3. A. T. Carter, *Elite Politics in Rural India* (Cambridge, 1974).

4. R. Nicholas and R. Inden, 'A cultural analysis of Bengali kinship' (Chicago), *South Asia Series, Occasional Paper* 18, pp. 91–7.

5. Village resettlements, Allahabad, NWP Revenue A Progs. May 1880, 29–40, India Office Library: *FSUP* iv, 651–66; Mutiny Rewards Bundle. Allahabad and Fatehpur Districts, Allahabad Commissioner's Office.

6. *FSUP* iv, 169–229.

7. R. Mukherjee, 'The rebellion in Awadh, 1857–8. A study in popular resistance', unpubl. D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1980.

8. As for instance, G. Pandey, 'A view of the observable: a positivist "understanding" of agrarian society and political protest in colonial India', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vii. 3 (Apr. 1980). Also R. Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 1983).

9. F. W. Buckler, 'The political theory of the Indian Mutiny', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, v (1922).

10. B. S. Cohn, 'Representing authority in Victorian India', in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

11. F. A. Nizami, 'Saints, scholars and shrines. North Indian Muslims and colonial rule, 1800–60', unpubl. D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1982.

Awadh in Revolt*

Rudrangshu Mukherjee

TALUKDARS AND PEASANTS: A POPULAR RESISTANCE?

[...] [In the beginning of this section, the author provides detailed information through tables that delineate the list of talukdars of southern Awadh and how they 'behaved' during the Rebellion, the number of men they could provide, and the distribution and strength of their forts. These have not been incorporated due to constraints of space.]

The talukdars, multiple roles in the rebellion covered a wide spectrum. There were consistent loyalists like Rustam Sah; others like Man Singh were loyal in the beginning and later fought actively, but as the wind changed became turncoats. Hanwant Singh steered a middle course. First a protector to the British, later a participant in the rebellion, he submitted as soon as British troops entered his ilaqa but always maintained his dignity and honour. Lal Madho Singh was a shade different from Hanwant Singh as he was more involved in the fighting and only submitted at the last moment while his men were still intent on fighting. And finally there was Beni Madho a rebel from the beginning till his death in Nepal.

The talukdars, both big and small, participated in the revolt wholeheartedly, and their action was not necessarily related to the losses they suffered under the British revenue settlement. This near-universal participation by the talukdars was widely noticed. Outram noted in a letter to Canning about the Awadh Proclamation that among the chief rajas of Awadh one would find only a dozen who were loyal to the Raj.[1]

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S. B. Chaudhuri's researches reinforce such a conclusion.[2] In southern Awadh—that is, in the districts of Unao, Salon, Sultanpur, Faizabad, and Dariabad—nearly seventy-four per cent of the talukdars fought or opposed the British. The extent of the talukdars' participation is emphasized in the comment of a British revenue officer who noted that to exclude from settlement talukdars who had carried the flag of revolt outside Awadh would result in a major upheaval:

> It would have the effect of changing more than half the land tenures of the Byratch division; one third of Faizabad, two thirds of Sultanpur, nearly the whole of Salone, and similar results in Seetapore and Mahomdee.[3]

The above calculation is based only on one criterion—the invasion of the North-Western Provinces. The picture would be even more staggering if rebellion *per se* was taken as the yardstick. In Salon only 12 out of 40 talukdars were loyal; in Sultanpur 11 out of 37: in Unao 1 out of 11; in Faizabad 3 out of 8 and in Dariabad 8 out of 30. If detailed lists were available for Gonda, Bahraich, Sitapur, and Muhamdi, where talukdars held the major chunk of the villages before annexation[4] and where the revolt did acquire a measure of intensity and durability, they would almost certainly reveal a similar pattern.

The only possible debate refers to the question of motives—a controversy dating back to the events themselves. British officers in Awadh saw a clear linkage between the Company's revenue policies and the talukdari revolt. Reid, who was an officer in Faizabad, wrote in June 1857 that the revolt was to be expected since 'Our settlement operations created such a social revolution'.[5] Another officer thought that the disaffection of the talukdars was 'natural enough as we have deprived them of part of their income.'[6] Outram also located the reasons for the talukdars' support to the rebel cause in the unjust treatment they had received in the settlement operations.[7] Some officers even suggested that the quickest way to quell the rebellion in Awadh was to cancel the settlement with the village proprietors and to engage in settlement with talukdars.[8] Canning, however, was quick to perceive that the causes of rebellion were not so straightforward. He noted that talukdars who had lost as well as those who had benefited were both involved in the rebellion:

> No chiefs have been more open in their rebellion than the Rajah of Churda, Bhinga, and Gonda. The Governor-General believes that the first of these did not lose a single village by a Summary Settlement, and certainly his assessment was

materially reduced. The second was dealt with in a like liberal manner. The Rajah of Gonda lost about thirty villages out of 400 but his assessment was lowered by some 10,000 rupees.

No one was more benefited by the change of government than the young Rajah of Naunpara. His estates had been the object of a civil war with a rival claimant for three years, and of these he was at once recognized as sole proprietor by the British government, losing only six villages out of more than a thousand. His mother was appointed guardian, but her troops have been fighting against us at Lucknow from the beginning.

The Rajah of Dhowrera also a minor was treated with equal liberality. Every village was settled with his family; yet those people turned upon Captain Hoarsay and his party....

Ashruf Bux Khan, a large talookdar in Gonda, who had long been an object of persecution by the late Government, was established in the possession of all his property by us; yet he has been strongly hostile.

It is clear that injustice at the hands of the British government has not been the cause of the hostility which, in these instances at least, has been displayed towards our rule.

The moving spirit of these men and of others amongst the Chiefs of Oude must be looked for elsewhere; and in the opinion of the Governor-General, it is to be found mainly in the repugnance which they feel to suffer any restraint of their hitherto arbitrary powers over those about them, to a diminution of their importance by being brought under equal laws, and to the obligation of disbanding their armed followers...[9]

A distinguished historian has, in recent times, agreed with the general line of Canning's argument: what mattered was not the extent of loss or the more material dimensions but the 'subjective attachment to a traditional status and way of life', military lordship and jurisdiction.[10] It is true that loss of status angered the talukdars; according to Hanwant Singh, British rule in Awadh was unpopular because 'to rich and poor we mete out even justice; a Talookdar cannot buy an acquittal'.[11] This loss of status and honour was also emphasized in various proclamations. Charles Wingfield also noted that the talukdars disliked British rule 'because it reduced them to disband their armies, pay their revenue regularly, and not oppress their ryots.'[12] However, to separate the loss of status from the impact of British revenue policy is to introduce an artificial distinction. It has to be stressed that from the outset British policy was consistently anti-talukdar. This led to large-scale dispossession in some areas, [...] and also to loss to status. Material loss and status-dissonance

were not always separate, watertight compartments. Both occurred in the more general context of an anti-talukdar policy. Individual losses suffered by each and every talukdar are not possible to quantify; the losses of some of the important rebels like Loni Singh, Lal Madho, Beni Madho, Hanwant Singh, Man Singh have been noted. [...] Their importance is not in question. Hanwant Singh emphasized it in his statement to barrow.[13] During the later stages of the rebellion, when overtures were being made to the talukdars, Beni Madho 'expressed fears that Government will as before make a summary settlement for three years and then take his estate...'[14] Lal Madho Singh was ready to submit to Lord Clyde provided his estates were guaranteed to him.[15] In fact more and more talukdars submitted when they realized that the British were intent on restoring them to their lands; if their estates were to be restored resistance could be sacrificed.[16] Where it occurred, dispossession (whether absolute or relative) and the loss of status and overlordship had a shattering impact on the world of rural Awadh. Together they created the basis for disaffection and revolt. It is an otiose exercise in disaggregation to assess which of the two grievances was of paramount importance.

Other concerns also motivated the talukdars. Hanwant Singh emphasized the general unpopularity of the annexation—'every one wishes to see the King restored, if not to the throne, at least to the country'.[17] He himself was a personal friend of Wajid Ali Shah and wished that the British would not tax his loyalty to his king.[18] The plight of the king and his family had moved him:

> ...with tears in his eyes the old man appealed to me 'is it justice' said he 'to turn a deaf ear when the King has sent his very women to plead at the very foot of your throne? Surely not.'[19]

Such traditional loyalties asserted themselves in the rebellion, drawing people out to resist an alien government. Beni Madho remained firmly committed to the king he had chosen to serve: 'Now if I were to swerve from his [Birjis Qadr's] directions I shall be faithless, and in my disposition there is no grain of faithlessness toward anyone'.[20] Mehndi Hussain, the former raja of Farrukhabad and the famous rebel of Sultanpur, announced while submitting to Lord Clyde, 'I was twenty-five years in the service of the King of Oude', implying, according to Ball, that 'he could not, as a man of honour, help fighting in the cause of one he had served so long'.[21] Evidently a varied and complex set of motives was at work.

This aspect of the rebellion is often underplayed. Metcalf plays down the talukdars' opposition to the British by emphasizing that they were basically fighting out old clan or family rivalries: 'The Mutiny was simply an arena in which old rivalries could be fought out anew.'[22] The example he chooses to illustrate his case is the rivalry between the raja of Balrampur and his enemy on the neighbouring Tulsipur estate, these representing the Janwar and Raikwar clans respectively. He argues that once the rani of Tulsipur and her followers had thrown in their lot with the rebellion and out of their old enmity had turned against the raja of Balrampur, the latter had to remain loyal to the British. Quite possibly some talukdars did try to settle old scores during the general upheaval. But at the same time some bridges were in fact mended, and ancient enemies fought together on the same side and against the hated firangi. One could counter Metcalf's example of the Balrampur-Tulsipur conflict with that of Chaudhuri Raghunath Singh of Jabrowli, a Janwar Rajput, who was a bitter foe of Beni Madho but yet made up his quarrel through the mediation of the raja of Daundiakhera and fought actively for Beni Madho. [...] Similarly Fateh Bahadur [...] joined Beni Madho even though the latter had once imprisoned him under Nawabi rule. In the rebellion many clans and families, with competing and divergent past histories, fought together against a common enemy. It is this unified opposition, rather than the odd exception, that strikes the historians of the revolt.[23]

Concerning the talukdars' participation there remains one more ghost to lay. This is the view that the revolt was basically compartmentalized, with very few linkages. To quote Stokes:

> Only a small handful of these [the leaders of the revolt] were fit or willing to look beyond their local horizon, even in Oudh where the magnate levies formed the bulk of the rebel forces compartmentalism remained the order of the day. Only when a local magnate was forcibly tipped out of his district by British military action was he constrained to enlarge his political horizon.[24]

It has already been noted how even before any kind of British victory in Awadh many talukdars had moved away from their own locality into Lucknow or had at least sent their fighting men there. In a sense, until the fall of Lucknow a large number of talukdars considered the defence of Lucknow, and therefore the defence of Awadh, top priority; at this time their political horizon was certainly not restricted to their own ilaqa. In fact this widening of linkages had begun earlier. Kaye records that many

of the chiefs and Lucknow '*soukars*'—he mentions Man Singh by name—were in correspondence with Nana Sahib about the revolt.[25] Some of the talukdars of southern Awadh fought for the Nana or sent help to him. [...] Beni Madho's brother Jograj Singh went to Kanpur to assist Nana Sahib. [...] The Kanpur uprising itself was said to have been instigated by one Jwala Prasad, a Brahmin from Baiswara. [...]. Jailal Singh personally welcomed the Nana, on Birjis Qadr's behalf, when he came to Awadh in August 1857.[26] Birjis Qadr's links with the Mughal court and traditions have also been noted.

It is true that men like Khan Bahadur Khan, Feroze Shah, or Kunwar Singh came into Awadh only after they had been 'tipped out' from their own region. Yet Khan Bahadur Khan was aware of the close connections between the Awadh and the Rohilkhand rebellions.[27] Kunwar Singh may have been drawn into the Awadh rebellion because of his near relation Beni Madho, and also because he wanted to ally himself to Man Singh.[28] It is significant that the rebel court in Lucknow gave a farman for Azamgarh to Kunwar Singh.[29] This not only shows the linkages of Kunwar Singh with the revolt in Awadh but also reinforces the thesis that the Lucknow court was harking back to its pre-British authority, that is, the kingdom of Awadh before its truncation in 1801 by Wellesley. The reactions of talukdars could often be influenced by factors operating from outside their locality. Barrow thought that Hanwant Singh's initial hesitation in joining the rebellion was influenced by the loyalty of his near relation, the raja of Rewa.[30] He felt pulled in two opposite directions by the raja of Rewa and his personal friendship with Wajid Ali; these two demands on his loyalty—both operating from outside his local world—were evident in his behaviour. A number of letters[31] from various talukdars to the Maulavi indicate that they were willing to ally themselves to forces and persons extraneous to their locality. Rebel leadership, whether magnate, court bureaucrat, or religious fakirs and dervishes, was not always confined to, and concerned with, localities. The rebels' vision may not have been national, yet they were open to influence from outside their ilaqa and their political horizons could extend beyond their locality to encompass more general causes and movements.

The real strength of the talukdars' resistance, and indeed of the revolt in Awadh, sprang from the unhesitating and complete support received from the peasantry and the general populace of the Awadh countryside. Beni Madho had claimed to Sleeman that when required his entire

peasantry would fight with him.[32] This was not a vainglorious boast: in the uprising, according to Barrow, there was 'hardly a village in Bainswara' which had not furnished its quota for the huge force under Beni Madho.[33] And in his own estate Beni Madho received the support and sympathy of the village zamindars and peasants because of the latters' 'attachment' to the talukdar.[34] In the revolt the talukdars did provide the bulk of the fighting force. Their levies far exceeded the number of their retainers. For example Rana Raghunath Singh of Khajurgaon had 1,500 retainers, but within a few hours he could provide three to four thousand men.[35] These must have been his peasants and clansmen. In the context of Awadh agrarian relations, with their mutual dependence and interpenetrations, such support and joint resistance came naturally. Resistance to the British was greatest and most prolonged in southern Awadh; and after this had been reduced, fighting moved onto Gonda-Bahraich, that is, resistance was most concentrated in those areas which have been delineated as the axis of talukdar-peasant interdependence.[36] Man Singh noted the importance of southern Awadh when he wrote that the rebellion was continuing because of the 'delay which has occurred in chastising Bainswarah'.[37]

The large-scale participation of the peasantry emerges from the character of fighting in rural Awadh. An officer reporting from the Awadh-N.W.P. border noted:

> ...the Oude people are gradually pressing down on the line of communication from the North.... The Oude people are villagers...these villagers are nearly intangible to Europeans melting away before them and collecting again. The civil Authorities report these villagers to amount to a very large number of men, with a number of guns.[38]

Talukdars were convinced that theirs was 'an army composed of men of every village'.[39] Outram perhaps implied the popular and peasant character of the resistance when he commented that the British were faced with an enemy 'ever able to move two miles to our one'.[40] The Chief of Staff himself noted how 'the *population of the country* rose and closed in on its rear' when the British army had advanced into Awadh.[41] Moreover, the general populace did not indulge in random fighting:

> It is very true that according to our notions of regular armies the insurgents have the appearance of a rabble but those who have dealt most with the Insurgents know that this rabble fights on a system...when the late Sir Henry Havelock

tried in the first instant to force his way into Oudh, he was obliged to retreat before the 'rabble' enemy.[42]

The people of Awadh had fought the British. This is clear from the number of ordinary and common weapons—the armoury of a 'peasant' army—that were recovered or surrendered. By the beginning of February 1859 there had been collected 29,941 spears, 427,932 swords, and 129,414 firearms.[43] Bows and arrows were counted at 6,418.[44] Firearms could be recovered even from the house of an ordinary peasant.[45] The total strength, in numbers, behind the rebellion is impossible to determine. According to official British estimates:

> the approximate number of rebels who have taken advantage of the Amnesty and returned to their homes without reporting themselves is according to reports received form District Officers Twenty thousand one hundred and twenty. I am however directed to observe that no reliance is to be placed on this return, as the number is quite inadequate and 200,000 is more likely to represent the number who have actually come in.
>
> But it would be impossible to do more than guess the numbers that have returned to their homes under the Amnesty. Probably *three fourths of the adult male population of Oudh, had been in rebellion...*[46]

After this statement it would be labouring the obvious to emphasize the popular, widespread character of the resistance.

It is a common assumption in 'mutiny' literature that the peasantry participated only under magnate leadership.[47] It is true that talukdari leadership was dominant in the revolt in the countryside. But the peasantry did not have a completely subaltern role, merely following where the magnate led. The best illustration comes from the ilaqa of the raja of Balrampur, Britain's most steadfast ally in Awadh. While the talukdar remained loyal, only 300 of his men were willing to side with him, 'the sympathies of the rest and of all about him are with the rebels'.[48] Digbijai Singh of Morarmow, one of the major chiefs of Baiswara, himself saved British fugitives and did not join the revolt, but his men fought at Lucknow.[49] A large number of the Bachgoti talukdars of Sultanpur—in fact the majority of them[50]—remained loyal to the British, but 400 leaderless Bachgoti clansmen were present at Bhadiyan.[51] In Dariabad, Syed Rahamat Ali [...] did not participate in the rebellion but his ilaqa contained 'rebels in strength'. Rani Talamund Koer [...] sent her *karinda* to surrender, but her ilaqa was full of rebels and a large number of them

were her own villagers. As late as October 1858, after most talukdars had started coming in, Barrow noted that the village communities had not rendered any assistance to the British forces when they entered a district and gradually assumed control.[52] Lal Madho Singh's peasantry and retainers were still intent on fighting, and went off to join Beni Madho while the raja walked into Lord Clyde's camp. Hanwant Singh had to abandon his initial vacillation and join the fighting because of growing pressure around him.[53] Resistance in Awadh was not always elitist in character. The revolt there had a mass and popular base—peasants and clansmen could and often did act outside the magnates' initiative.

The participation and initiative of the peasantry assume greater significance if it is recalled that the sepoys were, in their origins, peasants with close ties with their kinsmen in the villages. To use a cliche, the sepoys were really peasants in uniform. The importance of the sepoys stands in no need of greater emphasis. Their part in the revolt is well chronicled. Even loyal sepoy families could throw up a rebel: Sitaram's son was a rebel.[54] There was a report that the Begum was in correspondence with certain 'loyal' regiments and the agreement was that 'when they engage the rebels the Regiments are to fire blanks ammunition.'[55] The sepoys sparked off the rebellion; in Lucknow they also tried to keep a hand in the affairs of administration. In a sense therefore, given the sepoy-peasant linkages, the role of the peasantry was not really subordinate. In many cases their influence could be decisive. Even the arch rebel Beni Madho seems to have been pressurized by the sepoys and his men to keep on fighting. According to Hanwant Singh it was clear:

> that the rebellion was now kept up by the Sepoys who looked for no mercy and that Banee Madho and other Talookdars who had attached bodies of Mutineers to themselves found...[that] if they thought of joining the British the Sepoys would shoot them...[56]

The sepoy element persisted in fighting towards the end of 1858 because sepoys doubted the sincerity of the promises of pardon. There had been incidents in which sepoys promised a pardon had been killed without trial after surrender.[57] And such incidents were reported far and wide in Awadh.[58] Whereas talukdari elements in the revolt could be sure of a certain pardon, the peasant-sepoy element ran the risk of being butchered on surrendering.

It is of course an impossible task to assess precisely the motives that

led the peasant to rebel. To be sure the heavy overassessment laid the material basis of their disaffection. The settlement, by removing the talukdar—whom the peasant often saw as his protector—left him in a no-man's land. The revenue demand disturbed his 'subsistence ethic'. The removal of the king had an emotional impact which left its imprint on folk memory.[59] The entire range of fears about religion and caste that stirred the sepoys must have found echoes in the minds of the villagers. In fact the imposition of British rule and the subsequent policies caused an upheaval in the rural world. The Raj assaulted the traditional view of social norms and obligations, the realms of mutual interdependence between the raja and the peasant that constituted its moral economy. In the revolt of 1857, in the uprising of the entire agrarian population, this moral economy, the world of paternalism and beneficence, reasserted itself. Together the talukdar and peasant resisted intervention in their cherished world. The passionately held notions of the common weal, and the world of patronage and deference expressed themselves in such scenes of voluntary tendering of allegiance as Barrow witnessed in Hanwant Singh's courtyard,[60] in the talukdar's visualization of himself as a leader of protectors (*rakhwars*),[61] and in the united resistance and opposition the agrarian body presented. In a sense it was the revolt of a people trying to redeem their own past.

A whole amalgam of issues, an entire complex of emotions, traditions, and loyalties worked themselves out in the revolt of 1857. Here was a military mutiny, sparked off by certain fears about caste and religion, merging itself with disaffection created by interventions in the traditional rural world of Awadh, using the loss of land, loss of a king, and threats to religion as a rallying cry, seeking its identity in the traditions of a former despotism, and finding its popular base among a rural contraternity held together by bonds of mutual interdependence. The multiplex issues and the popular bases were noted already in 1858:

> Suddenly the people saw their King taken from amongst them and our administration substituted for his, which however bad, was at least native, and this sudden change of government was immediately followed by a Summary Settlement of the Revenue, which in a very considerable portion of the Province, deprived the most influential landholders of what they deemed to be their property, of what certainly had long given wealth and distinction and power to their families.

We must admit that, under these circumstances, the hostilities which have been carried on in Oude, have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion.[62]

It is probable that the revolt was so intense because the people of Awadh thought they were fighting in a just and legitimate war. In Awadh the opposition to the British in 1857 was truly universal, a 'people's' resistance.[63] It represented not a revolutionary challenge but a popular rejection of an alien order.

NOTES

1. Couper to Edmonstone, 8 March 1858: *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, S. A. Rizvi and M. L. Bhargava (eds) (hereafter *F.S.U.P.*), ii, p. 333.

2. S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indians Mutinies* (1857–1859), Calcutta, pp. 309ff.

3. Letter to Sec. to Chief Commr., no name, no date: Board of Revenue Oudh General (henceforth BROG) File No. 1037. The contents of the letter make it obvious that the writer was a high official.

4. See Table 3, Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*.

5. Reid to Edmonstone, 29 June 1857: For Dept. secret Cons, 25 Sept. 1857, Cons. No. 517.

6. (Illegible) to Outram, 17 Sept. 1857: Mutiny Papers of Outram etc.

7. Couper to Edmonstone, 8 March 1858.

8. Tucker to Canning, 12 July 1857: For Dept. Secret Cons., 18 Dec. 1857, Cons. No. 73.

9. Edmonstone to Outram, 31 March 1858: *F.S.U.P.*, ii, pp. 337–8.

10. Eric Stokes, *Peasant and the Raj* (1978), pp. 133, 135.

11. Memo by Carnegy, 21 Sept. 1858: B. R. Partapgarh File No. 385 Part 1, also available in For. Dept. Political Proc., 22 Oct. 1858, No. 263.

12. Quoted in Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the Raj* (1979), p. 175 Metcalf cites two memos by Wingfield dated 6 Feb. 1858 and 17 May 1858. The quoted sentence does not occur in the latter.

13. See Ch. 3.

14. Forsyth to Edmonstone, 24 July 1858: For. Dept. Secret Cons., 27 Aug. 1858, Cons. No. 33.

15. Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, ii, p. 530.

16. 'I have reason to know that many Talookdars expressed themselves highly pleased on hearing that hopes had been held out to one of their number, that he might retain certain of his villages, while a rehearing would be granted in

regard to other villages': so Carnegy to Bowring, 31 March 1858: For. Dept. Secret Cons., 28 May 1858, Cons. No. 397.

17. Memo by Carnegy.

18. Ibid., and Memo by Barrow, 25 Oct. 1858: BROG File no. 1037.

19. Memo by Carnegy.

20. Quoted in Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the Raj*, p. 179.

21. Ball, *The Mutiny*, ii, p. 562.

22. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the Raj*, p. 177.

23. Metcalf (p. 177, note 25) cites Elliott, *Chronicles of Oonao* (p. 51) for more instances of 'family feuds determining behaviour during the Mutiny'. What Elliott describes is the feud between Runjeet Singh and Oomrao Singh, and Buljor Singh and also states that the two sides took opposing sides in the revolt. Elliot does not imply or state that their old feud had a *determining* influence on their choice of sides in the revolt.

24. Stokes, *Peasant and the Raj*, p. 132.

25. J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, i, p. 579n.

26. *F.S.U.P.*, ii, p. 116.

27. See Ch. 4, in Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*.

28. Beni Madho's son had married the granddaughter of Kunwar Singh. See K. K. Datta, *Biography of Kunwar Sing and Amar Sing* (Patna, 1957), p. 143, note 2. That Kunwar singh was seeking an alliance with Man Singh is mentioned in ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 142.

30. Memo by Barrow, 25 Oct. 1858: BROG File No. 1037.

31. These letters will be found in *F.S.U.P.*, ii, pp. 367–79.

32. Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, Ch. 1.

33. Barrow's Memo on 9 Apr. 1859 cited in Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the Raj*, p. 182.

34. Commissioner Lucknow to Sec., C.C., 17 June 1859: cited in Metcalf, *Land, Landlord and the Raj*, p. 183.

35. See Appendix (No. 10) in Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*.

36. See Ch. 1 in Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*.

37. Man Singh to C.C. New Delhi: For Dept. Secret Cons., 30 July 1858, Cons. No. 72. The letter was probably written in July 1858 because Man Singh says he has just been besieged.

38. O'Brien to G.G. and C-in-C, 21 Aug. 1857: For. Dept. Secret Cons., 18 Dec. 1857, Cons. No. 596.

39. Translation of letter from Naipal Singh to Thakur Bulkri Sing and Situl Sing: For. Dept. Secret Cons. 25 June 1858, Cons. No. 57.

40. Couper to Edmonstone, 18 Jan. 1858: For Dept. Secret Cons., 29 Jan. 1858, Cons. No. 361.

41. Chief of Staff to Edmonstone, 19 June 1858: For. Dept. Secret Cons., 30 July 1858, Cons., No. 76 (emphasis mine).

42. Chief of Staff to Edmonstone, 20 June 1858: Ibid., Cons. No. 77.

43. Collection to Political Despatches 33 Pt. 2, Collection No. 21.

44. List of Arms surrendered, 16 Dec. 1858: For. Dept. Political Cons. 31 Dec. 1858, Cons. No. 244.

45. Capt. Thomas to Commissioner of Ordnance, 1 June 1858: BROG File No. 754.

46. Forsyth to Secy., Govt. of India, 27 June 1858: For Dept. Secret Cons., 22 July 1859, Cons. No. 223, (emphasis mine).

47. Stokes, *Peasant and the Raj*, pp. 131, 185.

48. Wingfield's Memo of 17 May 1858: BROG File no. 1037. It has to be pointed out that Metcalf (*Land and Landlords*, p. 176) on the evidence of the same memo says that the Balrampur raja had 3,000 supporters. This is evidently a mistake on the part of a very meticulous historian. I have checked the document and it clearly says: 'of his own men there are not 300 on whom he could rely, the sympathies of the rest and of all about him are with the rebels'.

49. See Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, Appendix (No. 22).

50. See Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, Appendix (Nos 51–68).

51. See See Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, Ch. 4.

52. Barrow's Memo of 25 October 1858: BROG File no. 1037.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Sitaram Pandey, *From Sepoy to Subedar, Being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sitaram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Native Army, Written and Related by Himself*, trans. Lt. Col. Norgate (Lahore: Bengal Staff Corps, 1873), ed. James Lunt (Delhyi: Vikas Publications, 1970), p. 163.

55. Carnegy's Newsletter (News of 21 Feb. 1858): For Dept. Political Proc., 30 Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 1137.

56. Carnegy's Memo, 21 Sept. 1858: B. R. Partapgarh, File No. 385, Part 1.

57. Russell, *Mutiny Diary*, p. 215 describes such a scene.

58. These men [that is, the rebel leadership in the Begum's camp at Baundi]...spread the most absurd and incredible reports in order to deter the wavering from submission. One story told and credited is that the British Officers enticed 1,000 sepoys to come in on promise of forgiveness and having secured them, put the whole body to death in one night...' Enclosure to Forsyth to Edmonstone 14 Aug. 1858: For Dept. Secret Cons., 27 Aug. 1858, Cons. No. 40.

59. See the folk songs about Wajid Ali and the annexation in W. Crooke, 'Songs About the King of Oudh', *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XL, 1911.

60. '...within one week of the dissolution of Govt in the District, the District Officers witnessed Hanwant Sing's Courtyard crowded with the very Proprietors

(that is, the proprietors who had been settled with) tendering their allegiance to the Talooqdar': Barrow Memo of 25 Oct. 1858: BROG File No. 1037.

61. Gulab Singh, the talukdar of Tirowl, was charged in his trial with having been a leader in the rebellion; he retorted that 'he was leader of Protectives (Rakhwars) not of rebels; that his people protected and did not destroy'. George Tucker to Barrow, 1 March 1859, Report as to the conduct of Gulab Singh: B. R. Partapgarh, File No. 105.

62. Secret Letter from East India House, London to Governor-General, 19 April 1858: *F.S.U.P.*, ii, p. 340.

63. Even Canning for all his disagreement with the Secret Letter of 19 April had to admit that 'the rising against our authority in Oude has been general, almost universal': Canning to Secret Committee of Court of Directors, 17 June 1858: *F.S.U.P.*, ii, p. 353.

The Politics of a Popular Uprising*
Bundelkhand in 1857

Tapti Roy

Popular response to the insurrectionary situation in 1857 was as multifarious and varied as resistance had been to the colonial state in the preceding decades. The manner of official reporting makes the uprising of the people in 1857 appear scattered, episodic, almost spasmodic. Unable to overcome the constraints, I can do little better than string together a variety of actions of the people ranging from open opposition to tacit non-co-operation. Fundamental to such responses was the very act to negate all visible forms of British power. Driving out government officials, bankers, and mahajans, burning official papers and plundering neighbouring towns were all negative forms of political assertion which to the British seemed acts of wanton destruction. Information on such destruction is more abundant precisely because it was the most obvious form of resistance that the villagers undertook.

In Bundelkhand, the district of Banda was the first to witness a widespread rural jacquerie. [...V]illages in parganas Buberoo and Mow on the Jamuna river rose up in rebellion soon after released prisoners from Allahabad and Kanpur crossed into this region. Tahsils along the Jamuna in the north of the district rose in rebellion one after another almost in geographical sequence, early in June 1857, even while the district officials were present at the station headquarters. Mayne observed (after Mow): 'The loss of the Kumasin, Buberoo, Simounee, and Pylanee Tehseelees soon followed in a like manner. I saw Tehselee after Tehselee going and the waves of the rebellion rapidly approaching Banda itself,

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and was totally helpless to prevent it. The whole District went to the bad in less than a week.[1] The rest of the district in the west and south-west awaited the departure of the British officials from Banda before rising. W. W. Osborne, on duty with the Maharaja of Rewah, reported on the 22nd of June: 'The district of Banda is in the hands of the rebels, after the local authorities had fled and a large body of mutineers had arrived at Banda.'[2] The sparking off of the rebellion was thus contingent upon two sets of knowledge, the first about the adversary and the second about the perceived vulnerability of that adversary. The physical presence of mutineers from Allahabad testifying to the overthrow of British rule in the neighbouring areas provided the occasion for the people of Banda to conclude that the enemy was vulnerable.

Underlying these rural uprisings was a specified selection of the targets of attack. Violence was directed against those institutions of power with which they interacted directly and immediately, namely the tahsils and thanas. Petty government officials, the thanadars, and tahsildars operating in villages had to, without exception, bear the brunt of popular antagonism. A pattern of rebel action emerged in all the villages of Banda and elsewhere. Thanas and tahsils were attacked and plundered, records destroyed, and government officials driven out. All vestiges of colonial rule were in the process eliminated. The escaped prisoners from Allahabad entered the pargana of Chiboo on the 8th of June. It was here that the government establishments first gave in.[3] In the judicial enquiry set up in 1859 against Ganeshi Brahmin, one of the servants of Seetalprasad, zamindar of Mau in pargana Chiboo, the event was described thus: 'The convicts from Allahabad returning to their homes in this District and spreading the most frightful tales of their success and the atrocities committed at Allahabad induced Mow zamindars to rebel. They rose en masse and attacked the Tahsil. The Tahsildar and his subordinates held out for three days until they were at last rescued by Hingum Khan of Derra Chukrwa zilla Allahabad. During the attack on the Tahsildari Monowur Beg, a chaprasi at the Tahsildari, was murdered at his own house. The prisoner was one of the ring leaders in the attack on the Tahsildari.'[4] The circumstances in which Munowar Beg was killed was that he was supervising a group of labourers at work when Ganeshi was said to have remarked: 'The English rule is now over. Why do you thus labour.' The chaprasi gave him an impolite answer when Ganeshi called upon the others around him and struck Beg down.[5] This was an instance of how

different elements—widespread dissension ranging from the zamindar to the labourer, coupled with a knowledge of the state's vulnerability—created the insurrectionary situation.

The following day, the 9th of June, the residents of the villages of Murka and Sungurra rose up in arms. When the tahsildar went to coerce them, they attacked him and turned him out. On returning to Buberu on the 11th, the tahsildar found the headquarters surrounded by people from Murka, Sungurra, and Buberu. They plundered the tahsili and treasury containing 5000 rupees, destroyed all the records, dismantled the building, and killed the karinda. The tahsildar and police fled to Banda.[6] Pargana Simouni immediately adjoining Augasi on the west 'was undisturbed' until the 10th of June. People from the villages of Johurpur and Bainda in that pargana then began plundering. Simree and Wasilpur followed. The villagers of Simree and Wasilpur had initially offered to assist the tahsildar at Tindwari and assembled for the purpose. 'No sooner, however, had they arrived at Tindwaree, the Headquarters of the Tahsil, than they sent messengers to the Johurpur people, telling them to come and aid in plundering the Tahsilee and village of Tindwaree. Some three or four thousand men of Johurpur, Bainda, Simree, and Wasilpur, on the 11th June, assembled at Tindwaree. They surrounded the Tehsildaree, and breaking into it, plundered the Treasure to the amount of 3000, destroyed the records and burnt and sacked the village.'[7] The Indian officials fled. Zamindars of Puchneyi, a large kham village, 'behaved in an exactly similar manner to the government Ameen and his office at that place'.[8] They remained in 'open rebellion' until the return of the British in April 1858. [...]

From driving out government officials, popular actions turned against all the others associated with the colonial power, outsiders and catalysts of disruption and disorder, the auction-purchasers, the decree-holders, and the merchants. All contradictions in the relationship of the village with others that could be accounted for by the intervention of the British power were sought to be corrected. Those perceived responsible for such contradictions were eliminated. In Banda, as the news of the departure of the British officials from the capital 'spread...like wild fire, villages rose in arms in all directions'.[9] Auction-purchasers and decree-holders were ousted without exception, a feature replicated elsewhere as well. Summing up his narrative of the uprising in the parganas, G. H. Freeling, collector and magistrate of Hamirpur, observed:

I need scarcely say that the general feature in the rebellion here has been the universal ousting of all bankers, buniyas, Marwarees, etc., from landed property in the district, by whatever means they acquired it, whether at auction, by private sale or otherwise...it is strange that in no instance do the class so favoured by our rule, the bankers and other traders, appear to have been able to keep their own in the struggle.[10]

Information is once again wanting on those responsible for ousting these intruders. A case was, however, brought against a certain Seina, son of Khuman, in January 1859 in view of the following circumstances: 'At the beginning of the disturbances the zemindars of Bedokhur Pergunnah Soomerpur (in Hamirpur) attacked all the bankers there, and plundered them, and in every instance this Seina was the leader, and in one case they were not content with plunder but 5 men headed by this prisoner rushed on an old man Girdhareeram and hacked him to pieces....'[11] The insurrectionary movement was thus utilized to correct all past wrongs. The inhabitants of Jalalpur in Hamirpur imprisoned Hyder Hossein Khan, munsif of that place, in order to recover form him the amount of fines which he had in his capacity as munsif imposed on them.[12]

One widely reported act of discriminatory violence was plunder and pillage. It appeared fairly common for villages to fall upon neighbouring towns. The town and bazar of Rajapur in Banda was attacked by the surrounding villagers. They were, however, repulsed by the local merchants who were able to muster a large force.[13] The large and wealthy village of Oram, south-east of Banda in the Badousa pargana, was plundered by the neighbouring zamindars and peasants.[14] Every mutiny in the town followed by the expulsion of government officials was an occasion for loot and plunder for the local townsmen, soldiers, and villagers close by. As soon as Mayne received a verbal message that mutinous cavalry was crossing into the district on the 8th of June, word got around and 'spread like wild fire'. Mayne continues in the very next line in a manner in which the sequence of events perhaps took placed: 'The bundmashes rose in the city, and plundering commenced.'[15] Similar reports came in from Hamirpur and Orai. Soldiers revolted in Hamirpur on the 14th of June. The official narrative describes what followed: 'During the occupation of the towns the sepoys plundered the wealthy men of the place and committed all sorts of excesses. On their departure the villagers in the neighbourhood completed the work of pillage and destruction of property.'[16]

The tahsildar and treasurer in Orai were also plundered by the soldiers and the people in the town.[17]

Depredations, widely undertaken, demonstrated at one level a certain power and strength acquired through actions in the rebellion. They were also effective means of challenging the contested order. What appeared to the British 'outrages committed by the village communities one upon another',[18] were to those involved articulations of their assumed power. After all, conquering armies always overran villages and plundered them. On the outbreak of mutinies in the neighbouring stations, 'inhabitants' of Gurha, south of Banda, rose in arms, blocking roads and plundering travellers and neighbouring villages. Gurha was surrounded for miles by ravines. Few who passed that way escaped plunder at the hands of these villagers. They tried to stop British official who were fleeing from Banda to Nagode.[19] It is quite interesting how the British even in the context of the widespread ferment tried to implicate some as the 'leaders' by ascribing to them initiative in the rebellion. The outcome was Mayne's rather confused statement: 'Joyraj Singh, Hunooman Singh and Rughunath Singh were the chief actors in the village Goorha where the villagers plundered travellers. They were however as prominent as others in the village.'[20] The 'most atrocious case of rebellion and Dacoitee and arson, attended with murder and wounding during the disturbances' was brought against the 'inhabitants' of Bagha and Chousend in pargana Badousa, Kuruhi in Augasi and Para in Seonda. The description of their acts of violence is repetition of the standard account. 'They stopped the road and plundered all travellers and plundered a large party of Beoparees who put up for the night at Bagha. They then all made a continued attack on the large village of Orun, where they plundered, and burnt a portion of the village, and killed two of the inhabitants and wounded two others.' Although six men were identified as the chief 'ring-leaders', the Chousend and Bagha 'people' in general were suspected of having initiated violence.[21] Similarly: 'Residents and zemindars of Mouzah Murka, pargana Augasee the very worst village in the whole District,...robbed and destroyed many neighbouring villages and mustered to attack Banda before the British left it and carried on a permanent system of plunder and riot. They refused submission on British return and several men were apprehended as said to be ringleaders. Their caste was not specified but none of them were thakurs or Rajputs.[22]

Similar acts of plunder were attributed to inhabitants of the large village of Gondee in Hamirpur who turned out in 'great numbers...armed and attacked and plundered' mouza Rugecha.[23] In June 1857, shortly after news was received of the massacre at Jhansi, 'Mungal Singh Gujar, an old man of eighty-two, proceeded with 200 followers and plundered the town of Mau Mohoni'.[24]

While plunder was the principal form by which people asserted their power, arming themselves was the principal means by which they did so. Mayne closes his account on popular rebellion in Bundelkhand with the following description:

> Tulwars and matchlocks were scarce in Bundelkhand, but armed with spears and scythes, and iron-bound lathies, and extemporary axes, formed of chopping knives fastened on sticks, they imagined to be warriors, chose their own kings, and defied all comers. Never was revolution more rapid—never more complete.[25]

Seldom do we have such a graphic testimony of the people's political consciousness crystallized into an alternate order. Villagers armed themselves as befitting soldiers in defence of a political alternative, their own alternative for which they chose their own king. Whatever were the limits of such kingdoms, their very emergence and existence demonstrated the power which the people gained through their insurgency in 1857. They zealously guarded their own rule against intruders and thereby 'defied all comers'. Arming oneself was an essential prerequisite for defending the people's order and European officials fleeing from Mahoba to Nagode en route Banda observed that people of every village they passed turned out armed.[26] P. G. Scot, an officer of the 12th Native Infantry escaping from Nowgong to Allahabad, also en route Banda, related in his personal memoirs how almost each village they passed was guarded and armed with whatever weapons people could muster. Light country-made matchlocks and big bamboos were all that they had, but now these proved more effective than British arms; '...shots from clumsy village-made matchlocks were coming among us with awful force, while our shots fell half-way', Scot recollected.[27]

British fugitives in their flight confronted the villagers directly and were witness to popular reaction to the altered political fortunes. Fleeing officials confirmed the collapse of British power and a growing conviction that British rule once overthrown would never return. The sight of these officials driven out of their respective stations presented a spectacle of

the authority of the state in retreat. A general feeling of hostility marked the behaviour of most villagers towards the foreigners. [...]

In Banda, the mutiny and the widespread rebellion caused the officials there to evacuate that station as well. Fugitives from Fatehpur were now accompanied by the officials of Banda and together they hurried southwards. On their way to Kalinjar and then to Nagode, they met people inclined to resist.[28] They reached Kalinjar and put up at the thana which was at the centre of the village. In the village, the sweat-meat sellers refused to serve the British even when offered money. The latter were forced to put the coin down and help themselves to the sweets. Shorn of authority, their only identity was that of being Christians and therefore untouchables.[29] Opportunities were seldom lost to demonstrate the altered situation. [...]

The British were as sensitive to the reversal of authority and power as the people were aware of it.

Scattered groups of Europeans were found scampering over the countryside in search of safe refuge. Nearly everywhere, the villagers received then with open hostility. [...]

One obvious manifestation of the people's perception of the state was the circulation of rumours in 1857. Rumours precede or follow the actual outbreak of rebellion; they do not cause it. But it is in a situation of insurgency that rumours take shape, spread, and grow. Rumours in 1857 reinforced popular fears and hopes about the forces of domination and resistance. Though not potent enough to challenge the British structure of power, such inversions of meaning sustained active protest. Rumours now were associated with certain incidents that appeared extraordinary, mysterious, and ominous. Soldiers could very well have shared a belief in such rumours but there was something very rural in the context from which such strange episodes were derived. They were proof of uncertain times and spread a feeling of crisis that was translated into the belief that British rule was nearing its end.

The most well-known of such unusual occurrences was the distribution of chapatis. Reports of their circulation come chiefly from districts of northern India in Rohilkhand and the upper Doab. P. G. Scot, an officer of the 12th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry at Nowgong, in his account refers to chapatis being sent around in central India as well.[30] No one knew the origin of such chapatis or what they implied. Every area interpreted the incident in its own terms: but every annotation, associated with the popular attitude towards the British state, saw the latter on the brink of a collapse.

The pattern in which the chapatis were circulated was that the person who received two of them was to make ten more and circulate them in the adjoining village. Usually, the village chowkidars were assigned the task.[31] In central India, Scot described a singular nature of this incident and its implications to the local people. 'It is remarkable that the cakes are distributed by the hands of the very lowest caste men that can be found; and the natives say that it is intended by Government to force or bribe the headmen to eat them, and thus lose their caste.'[32] British officials in north India were hard put to explain such a remarkable incident and the rapidity with which the chapatis travelled perplexed them. The course that the circulation took suggested to them the possibility of its starting point being in Bundelkhand or somewhere further south.[33] But in Bundelkhand itself, the spread of chapatis did not appear to have featured very prominently. A little south in Panna, the raja mentioned four strange things that occurred in the last four years to P. G. Scot:

> First, a saying passed from village to village that the sister should protect the brother—meaning that the weak should have power over the strong i.e. the natives over the English; second, the women of each village went to the Zamindar of another village and said that they had come to plunder him, and he then gave them some clothes, etc; thirdly came the chupattis or small cakes; and fourthly, for the last year, there had been a demand for diamonds, the staple produce of Punna, such as was never known before.[34]

The notion of authority was turned upside down through beliefs, sayings, and unusual rituals. To borrow Ranajit Guha's analysis, such beliefs seen as omens 'appear in "moments of collision" when the generally accepted semioticization of a social or political order comes under question and unforeseen options are opened up, when for instance the foundations of a ruling power are seriously threatened as was that of the Raj by the revolt of 1857'. Such rumours turned beliefs acted both as forces of mobilization and as transmission of resistance and rebellion against authority.[35]

The above account of the rebellion of the people shows a marked absence of reference to certain areas, chiefly the western districts of Lalitpur, Jhansi, and Jalaun. Civil rebellion here was described in the official reports in terms of the uprising of the thakurs, since the politics of the thakurs dominated the politics of rebellion in this region. This domination

operated in two ways. First, the British authority stood most threatened by the force of the thakur rebellion in these three districts. It was their uprising that challenged the state directly and immediately. Suppressing the Rajput actions was thus the principal end of the counter-insurgency forces. It was imperative, therefore, that British officials spend pages describing he feature of Rajput protest. Those below them were taken to be mere appendages to the dominant powerholders of the countryside. Second, the stronghold of the thakurs was a major political phenomenon in these districts. The protest of the villagers was thus linked with that of the thakurs. In the combined opposition to state forces one complemented the other. But while the uprisings of the thakurs emerged as the central theme, those of the village slipped into the roles of accessories. The points of convergence of the politics of the two levels in these districts cannot be categorically spelt out. They were subsumed in one general, concerted struggle directed towards overthrowing the colonial political structure. [...]

II

Desertion was also the immediate response of the people to the march of British forces. An official accompanying Hugh Rose in Bundelkhand observed about the region they travelled before coming to Jhansi:

> The country we marched through, in reaching the place (Jhansi) gave little evidence of the change that had come over it since last traversed by Europeans. Excepting that a few or no inhabitants were seen, the cultivation had been carried on as of old, and the field were teeming with corn ripe for the sickle; but it seems as though a plague had swept over the land, and carried off its occupants. The villages were deserted, and grass grew rank and untrampled in the streets: while the crane and longlegged wading birds, which love solitude, haunted the tanks and waters.[36]

Villagers deserted from fear of British retribution and also from their refusal to give in to the British order. Therefore, people in villages adjoining the independent states, without exception, fled there. 'The complaint of want of co-operation on the part of the rural population and their not supplying British detachment with information or assistance is not peculiar to Bundelkhand. It arises in part from the villages being deserted on the approach of British columns and the alarm they create.'[37]

Most of the inhabitants of the Bhandere pargana in Jhansi went over to the neighbouring native states.[38] The British detachment at Malthone

found a great many of the villages in southern Lalitpur deserted by the inhabitants.[39] Even after the British set themselves up once again in the different districts, desertion of villages was something they had to contend with. About Banda, it was reported in July 1858: 'The district generally quiet, but in many of the villages the entire population had fled and settled in the independent states, whence though no criminal charge is made against them they will not return.'[40] Villages continuous to jungles were invariably deserted, the people taking shelter in them.'[41]

III

Combating forces of rebellion at different levels by sheer force and the application of their superior armed strength, the British ultimately staged a comeback. They fought major battles, reoccupied the principal towns, punished offenders, and reinstated the district administrative staff. But they were still some way from exercising political control over the countryside. For they had two major tasks to achieve. The thakurs had to be brought around and, equally important, normal and regular collection of revenue had to be resumed. Here they were confronted with a kind of resistance they really had not accounted for. Villagers now stood up to resist the state forces either by driving out officials sent to collect revenue, physically assaulting them in very many cases. But the more ubiquitous form of opposition was the constant support, assistance, and shelter they extended to the rebel thakurs. Not having resources to muster a contending force to forestall the reassertion of British power, village zamindars and peasants in 1858 joined the thakurs, invited rebels from outside, and conceded to the authority of Despat, Burjore Singh or other leading thakurs. The presence of several groups of rebels under the thakurs in Hamirpur allowed a number of villages in the Jalalpur pargana to defy the British order.

The zamindars and peasants of the villages of Chandaur, Lokhar, Atrauli, and Dhungwa brought Shankar Singh, a rebel thakur of Kakrohi, to Chandaur in July 1858 and made him occupy twenty-seven villages in their vicinity. Likewise residents of Panwar, Lodhipur, Nevada, Majith, and Gavipara invited rebel forces in Kalpi to come to Jalalpur.[42] Hariprasad Thakur and the peasants of Panwar actually joined the rebels along with those of Manmasa and Nawahi, all in the same pargana.[43] This was one of the regions that regularly provided the rebels with provisions.[44] In

the attack on the thana and tahsildari of Rath, the rebels were joined by a large number of villagers, among others those belonging to mauza Gohanda.[45] Adjacent to Jalalpur in the east, villagers of Serowlie Buzurg in the Sumerpur pargana sent for two guns in order to attack British boats passing along the river Jamuna. They also erected batteries against forces sent from Kanpur and gave the latter a stiff battle.[46] When revenue collection began in July in Madhogarh, Jalaun, the villagers called the rebels and the collection had to be stopped.[47] A 'very serious case' was brought against Seawron a village in Hamirpur where eight chaprasis went to collect revenue and one of them went to give the Royal Proclamation in December 1858. Zamindars of the village sent for the rebels who came down, seized the chaprasis, murdered six, and left the seventh for dead. The official notification followed: 'It is a notoriously rebel village whence they (rebels) draw all their supplies.'[48] An identical incident was reported at Mowaband, pargana Jaitpur, also in Hamirpur. Here on the 3rd of June 1859, a tahsili jamadar and several chaprasis went to the village to collect revenue. They assembled all the zamindars and patwaris of the village. The official account ran: 'On being pressed for their rent, Purmanand (one of the zamindars) asked leave to go for two hours and get it from his house, this was given and on the expiration of the time he not appearing Jamadar went to his dwelling and found it quite empty; shortly after the rebels under Despat's brother surrounded the village and killed 2 chaprasees the rest with the Jamadar escaping with greatest difficulty.[49]

The naib tahsildar of Indurki complained in July 1858 that the people in the villages joined Burjore Singh in his depredations for plunder and for food.[50] Instances of villagers joining one or the other thakur leader on his expeditions seem to have been quite frequent. Burjore Singh encamped at Salia Buzurg in tashsil Deva of Jalaun; people from the adjoining villages joined him.[51] Usually when a particular town or village was attacked, the people of the surrounding areas joined in the plunder. Burjore Singh occupied Madhogarh in Jalaun in July 1858 with a force of 500 men. Their number was increased by the villagers of Gursenda, Madaripura and others in the neighbourhood of Madhogarh.[52] Similarly, after Jalaun was taken in July 1858 by Burjore Singh, most of the people who joined in the plunder of the town lived two or three koss away from it.[53] Residents of Bahadurpur and Bhumrone also in pargana Madhogarh, on the other hand, joined Dowlat Singh in plundering and overrunning the country around.[54]

It was relatively easier for the British to reimpose their authority over villages in Banda. In the absence of rebel thakurs leading large bands of followers, the rural population had no alternate organized source of strength to fall back on and lay exposed before the British forces. Individually, villages resisted as long as they could. In May 1858, it was reported that 'several villages in various directions still remain in open hostility and Brig Whitlock is yet unable to detach a force to punish them. Revenue is scarcely at all collected'.[55] Mayne wrote about the villages of pargana Pailani, north of the river Ken, that they 'are inclined more or less to side with the rebels and refuse to attend on the tahsildar'.[56] The Muslims of Moudha and several people of the neighbouring villages actively supported the rebels in the latter's combat with the state forces throughout May and June 1858.[57]

The assistance extended by villagers to thakurs was one of the most crucial factors that enabled the latter to resist authority for as long as they did, their capture being made impossible by the general sympathy prevailing in their favour. Writing about Jalaun in June 1859, a British officer wrote: 'The district is a very large one, the sympathies of the villagers entirely with the rebels. Information there is none, or what is far worse only false information, and I find it impossible even from the inhabitants of a plundered village, to extract any reliable or useful information respecting the rebels.'[58] Thus genuine sympathy co-existed with the fear of thakur reprisals in the event of assistance being withheld. The rebels 'plunder no village which furnishes them except if it chances to be one belonging to a chief or prince, notoriously on the British side, and to escape pillage supplies will always be delivered'.[59]

Fear apart, there was a sense of identification with the interests and politics of the thakurs. Every leading thakur had his own region of influence within which he received staunch support. One such village was Nunora in pargana Panwari, south-west of Hamirpur. It was described in official language as 'a village notorious in every way for assisting the rebels'.[60] The village was fined 3000 rupees because the rebels always drew supplies and money from here. They came at all hours of the day and night to collect replenishments. Therefore, 'every inhabitant of the village is doubtless an accomplice in the crime' and 'the whole village was implicated'.[61] Three Khangars, Gyan Shan, Sukh Singh, Mukkoo, and Boodhoo of zilla Hamirpur, were charged with rebellion in January 1859: 'These men belong to the notorious village of Hylutpore, one of the

rebel headquarters and since the Amnesty they have not ceased from evil doing. On chuprasees being sent to collect they ordered that their heads should be cut off unless they desisted, threatened death to any one that paid, and stated to all that the produce of the village had been promised to Despat and Chattar Sing and no one else should have it and thus forced the Government officials to leave the village. This being clearly proved they are sentenced capitally.[62] Burjore Singh and Dowlat Singh were always supported by villagers in Kuchwahagar. The village of Lahar in western Jalaun was another major base from where the two thakurs regularly drew their supplies.[63] In the south-western corner of the Hamirpur district, villages bordering Jhansi in the Kashipur thana provided shelter and protection to Chattar Singh and his followers.[64] The villagers withheld information and hid rebels, as was reported about the people of Sachowra in southern Hamirpur.[65] Usually villages adjoining the original homes and landholdings of the thakurs extended support to them under every circumstance and such support continued as long as the resistance of the thakurs lasted. Villages in the jagir of Alipura always provided for the needs of Bakht Singh. Even Despat found shelter and provisions here. Hindupat, the jagirdar had been loyal to the British. But he had little control over the people of the villages and they continued to assist the rebels.[66] In the wake of such rural support, the British were hard put to track the thakurs down. The force of this alternate domain of politics proved too strong for the organized state machinery to combat. One of the reasons why rebellion persisted so long in Bundelkhand was the internal strength of its politics, a product of popular participation and thakur leadership.

As late as in the mid-1860s, the deputy inspector-general of police on a visit to Jaitpur found:

> The general feeling of the people whether actuated by feudal attachment to the family of Nuneh Dewan or fear of his vengeance or that of his relatives, is, in that part of the District decidedly favourable to him, in some cases, actively so, villagers supplying him and his followers with money, food, etc. and in nearly all others by passive assistance and defeat of all efforts made by the Police to get information.[67]

Davi Singh of Dongra continued to elude apprehension until 1862. 'Favoured either through friendship, or fear, by the whole population of the country (Lalitpur and Sagar districts), with boundless jungles and

retreats to run to, in the adjacent native states, hunting them about the country was unproductive of no good whatever [sic].'[68] In 1859, a Jowahar Rajput was sent as a spy by the British deputy commissioner to the camp of the 'bagees'. Reporting on the movements of the force commanded by Davi Singh, he said in his deposition: 'They receive supplies from every village and have spies all about; every movement is at once reported to them: as soon as the force passes near any village, the villagers run and give them information.'[69] After Davi Singh's death, his son kept up the tradition of rebellion until the late 1860s. Villages which provided the thakur with assistance and shelter openly declared that they would not give him up.[70] This was in 1868, when the mantle of the Queen's supremacy was tightly tucked around all the corners of India. Peasants in remote villages evolved their own indigenous methods of piercing through the shroud of power.

Betraying a thakur involved a question of honour. Pujari Khangar of the village of Khuma near Puthari, between Nowgong and Gerowli, abused the sepoys of Gerowli state for having taken Aman Singh, an associate of Despat, prisoner in 1860. He told them that there would always be a stain on the brotherhood for having given up a thakur.[71]

The inhabitants of the village of Rawatpur in the district of Hamirpur killed a policeman because he happened to be there on the day the rebels were passing through early in 1865. The son of the zamindar in Rajpura village, also in Hamirpur, was murdered because he had given information about the rebels to the state authorities.[72] A similar incident took place in Mowaband in the Jaitpur pargana of Hamirpur. Bhowan, the zamindar of Bachrehur, had purchased the village of Mowaband from the government in the beginning of 1861. In October of the same year, when he went to collect revenue, he was murdered. Apart from the antipathy that the villagers had for a new purchaser, the principal reason for their action was that Bhowan had been responsible for the apprehension of Omrao and Zalim, Despat's two lieutenants. Mowaband was one of the villages from where Despat and Omrao regularly obtained supplies and information.[73]

IV

Together with the marching army and the contingent of administrative staff went another essential prerequisite for the normal functioning of

the state: the collection and collation of information...thorough mopping up operation undertaken by the army through the country was accompanied by detailed reporting of what was called the 'affairs' of the region, sent and computed weekly. And available information was then arranged in terms of what signified 'order' and 'disorder'. The British set out to re-establish the order and peace that was indispensable for its survival. The entire counter insurgency enterprise and the measures comprising it were, however, framed with reference to justice and legal procedures.

Therefore, a judicial machinery was set up and judicial enquiries instituted for trying 'penal' cases against the offenders of justice and peace, offenders to the interests of the state. Lists of offenders were prepared for each category of rebels—the rajas, the soldiers, and the thakurs. Leaders were identified, their followers were marked out and punishments consistent with their offence prescribed. In dealing with rebellion in the villages, individuals could not be picked on nor could the initiative be attributed to a handful. The entire site of the action was demarcated in terms of being 'notorious' or peaceful. In every district, certain villages in one subdivision or scattered over many subdivisions were branded good or bad, loyal or rebel. The Jalalpur pargana in Hamirpur and the Madhogarh pargana of Jalaun were two such black-listed regions. A large number of villages here stood in support of the rebels in defiance to state forces. In the case of Lalitpur, such differentiations could not be made as is evident from the Police Report of 1875 which said: 'There is not one single village in Tehri or Lalitpur where there is not a 'badmash' (meaning an accomplice)...one village is as bad as the other, and I cannot attempt to name any in particular.'[74]

Once villages were marked out, they could be destroyed, which was the usual punishment decreed for them. But in the wake of such widespread dissent, it was neither feasible nor expedient to raze villages extensively. The caution was evident in Pinkney's instructions to Fenton, the deputy commissioner of Chanderi: 'Destruction of villages cannot be sanctioned. In each village there are probably not more than 10 or 12 individuals of the military class out with the rebels, if the village is burned or other ways destroyed the whole of the inhabitants are put to great distress....'[75] Efforts were made to distinguish men by their actions and then to identify them by their caste. Since Jalalpur in Hamirpur was part of the country where the Lodhis predominated, rebellion was here

ascribed to the Lodhis. In August 1858, reports came from the thanadar of Islampur that Lodhi zamindars and peasants were seen moving around armed and undertaking depredations on the surrounding regions.[76] In areas of Bundela stronghold, the Ahirs were the most numerous among the cultivating castes. They were found to be strongly supportive of the Bundela thakurs throughout their resistance.[77]

For a more detailed and systematic tabulation of facts regarding the people implicated in rebellion, lists were compiled by junior Indian officials, tahsildars or below. We will look at a few of these lists drawn up for some parganas in Jalaun.[78]

Written in Urdu, they were drawn up with multiple descriptive headings, such as 'villages who joined the rebels', 'badmashes, pargana Andrekhi', 'rebellious zamindars in the different villages', 'villages, some of whose residents have joined the rebels', or 'villages, residents of which voluntarily joined the rebels'. Despite such explicatory labels, these lists are striking because of their opacity. They really tell us very little about the people except what the narrative account of their actions had already revealed. Except in lists where the names of registered 'culprits', the 'badmashes' and their 'crimes' were categorically specified, the others merely reiterated the people's participation in terms of social groups, mostly aggregates of caste groups. The names of twenty-eight villages were arranged in the left column and remarks about them in the right column by the tahsildar of Jalaun on the 7th of September 1858. [...] In eight instances, the column on the right contained 'total rebels', 'all joined' or 'the whole village'; in five cases, 'some people' were reported to have joined. In two villages, all the Gujars were marked out as rebels; in the rest they were Sengar Rajputs or just thakurs. The second list from the tahsildar of Deva is no different, except that the caste names this time included Chamars and Bhadorias. Different terminology, 'lambardars' and 'cultivators' in lieu of 'the whole village', does not reveal anything more than collective participation. The individual names that were included were, however, left hopelessly without any reference. The third list appears more ambitious. Divided into five columns, it included the names of persons who joined, the names of persons who did not join and general remarks about thirty-seven villages of Kunar pargana. Most of the persons whose names were specifically recorded belonged to the Rajput biradari of lambardars, whose property rights could well be defined by the

'bhaiachara' formula. As in the case of the thakurs, the extended family within a village provided crucial strength and support to active rebellion. Apart from the Rajputs, a few Ahirs, Lodhis, Kayasths, and Mochis were occasionally referred to. Among those who did not join, in quite a few villages, the column was left blank, the general remark being 'all villagers were rebels'. The standard official opinion was that all joined the rebels—whether they were ashrafs or kamins. There was one exception in the village of Mohanthaopur where Ishree, the lambardar, did not join but Mohan Chamar, along with all the other Chamars, did. Only the Chamars were implicated.

We are thus left with two principal indices to make any meaning of the rebellion of the people, the uprising that swept through the countryside of Bundelkhand in 1857—a series of actions organized by a certain group of people singled out in terms of a spatial demarcation determined by their villages. It was politics within the villages, alliances and accommodation among the people which organized them in action against the state. In the third list [...] the names of those who joined the rebellion were in most cases those of the zamindars. Here the zamindars listed referred not to single person but to lambardars or the principal members together with others of the brotherhood. The bhaiachara land holding pattern was crucial for mobilizing the members of a single extended family into active participation. Referring back to the description of different land-rights and caste categories earlier in the chapter, there seemed much flexibility both in terms of the caste composition of the zamindars and kashtkars and the economic divisions among them. The marginality of agricultural production in Bundelkhand acted as an equalizer among different sections within the village. No one within the village could enjoy any great degree of prosperity. This also prevented the state from driving a wedge between the rich and the poor. Impositions of the state, on the contrary, fell hard on everybody; impoverishment was equally widespread among the zamindars and the cultivators. It was therefore neither improbable nor unlikely that they found in the political situation of 1857 an opportunity to combat their common antagonist, the British, given the potential strength of the state forces, if they had to challenge them effectively they had to operate collectively. They had done so before but now they took advantage of new factors such as what was seen to be the imminent overthrow of the British rule and the widespread thakur

rebellion. No one led, but all rose together; 'leaders', 'followers', 'zamindars', 'peasants' as substantive categories dissolved in the actions of rural dissent in 1857.

NOTES

1. F. O. Mayne, *Narrative of Events, Banda*, p. 316.
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3. Mayne, *Narrative of Events, Banda*, Appendix A, pp. 337–40.
4. Government vs. Ganeshee Brahmin. From Mayne, Special Commissioner, 30 May 1859, North Western Provinces (henceforth N.W.P.) Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 27–30 June 1859, no. 410, India Office Library (henceforth I.O.L.) Ganeshi was sentenced to death.
5. Ibid.
6. Mayne, *Narrative of Events, Banda*, Appendix A, pp. 337–40.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., para 8, p. 325.
10. *Narrative of events connected with the Mutiny at Hamirpur* by George H. Freeling, Collector and Magistrate, para 19, p. 493.
11. Freeling to Muir, Camp Sumoura, 1 January 1859, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 19 January 1859, no. 145 (I.O.L.).
12. Translation of a letter from C. Chester, Commissioner of Allahabad to Sreemunt Narain Rao and Sreemunt Madhav Rao, 30 July 1857, Banda Collectorate Records, Box 2, Sl. no. 30, file no. 31, Dept. xviii Uttar Pradesh Regional Archives, Allahabad (henceforth U.P.R.A.A.).
13. Mayne, *Narrative of Events, Banda*, para 10, p. 316.
14. List of persons sentenced under Special Commission of Acts xi, xiv, and xvi of 1857 for the week ending 4 December 1858. From the Special Commissioner, Banda, 31 December 1858, Banda Collector Records, Sl no. 40, file nos 41 (II), Dept. xviii (U.P.R.A.A.).
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16. C. Chester, Commissioner, 4 Division to Lt. Col. R. Strachey, Allahabad, 22 October 1857, Home Department, Public Branch, 27 November 1858, no. 6 (N.A.I.).
17. Munshi Sheopershad, Kanpur, 26 August 1857 to G. Browne, Home Department, Public Branch, 6 November 1857, no. 18 (N.A.I.).
18. W. C. Western, Dy. Commissioner, 1 Class, Sagar to W. C. Erskine, 20 July 1857, Foreign Secret Consultations, 30 September 1857, no. 573 (N.A.I.).
19. List of persons sentenced under the Special Commission for the week

ending 25 December 1858, Banda Collectorate Records, Sl. no. 40, file nos 41 (II), Dept. xviiii (U.P.R.A.A.).

20. List of persons sentenced for the week ending 25 December 1858. From Mayne, 31 December 1858, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 19 February 1859, no. 245 (I.O.L.).

21. Commissioner of Allahabad to Secretary to the Government of N.W.P., 8 June 1859, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 1 July 1859, no. 19 (I.O.L.). List of persons sentenced under the Special Commission for the week ending 4 December 1858. Banda Collectorate Records, Sl. no. 25, file nos 40 (II), Dept. xviii (U.P.R.A.A.).

22. List of persons sentenced from the week ending 26 June 1858. From Special Commissioner, F. O. Mayne, 10 July 1858. Banda Collectorate Records, Sl. no. 40, file nos 41 (II), Dept. xviii (U.P.R.A.A.).

23. Pinkney to Bayley, Camp Hamirpur, 15 March 1859, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 14 April 1859, nos 279–80 (I.O.L.).

24. Government vs. Mungal Singh Gujar, Aman Bangee, Mulloo Gujar, Jhansi, 12 May 1859, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 1 June 1859, no. 16 (I.O.L.).

25. Mayne, *Narrative of Events, Banda*, para 8, p. 325.

26. R. W. W. Ellis to the Secretary to the Government of India, Nagode, 24 June 1857, Foreign Secret Proceedings, 31 July 1857, no. 177 (N.A.I.).

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36. J. H. Sylvester, *Recollections of the Campaign in Malwa and Central India under Maj. Gen. Sir Hugh Rose G.C.B.* (Bombay, 1860), pp. 84–5.

37. R. M. Hamilton, Agent Governor-General for Central India to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, 15 February 1859, Military Department Proceedings, 18 March 1859, no. 361 (N.A.I.).

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43. From the Duffadar of Pargana Jalalpur, 17 July 1858, Hamirpur District. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta no. 8, file no. 9, Sl. no. 9 (U.R.R.A.A.).

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48. Weekly report of proceedings of the Special Commissioner under xi, xiv, and xvi of 1857 for zillah Hamirpur ending 26 December 1858, N.Y. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 10 January 1859, no. 214 (I.O.L.).

49. Pinkney to Couper, Jhansi, 17 October 1859, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 21 October 1859, no. 515 (I.O.L.).

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53. From Dy. Magistrate, Kunwar Daraz Allee, 7 August 1858, Jalaun District, Urdu-Persian Records, Basta no. 5, file no. 125 (U.P.R.A.A.).

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66. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box 7, file no. 23, Sl. no. 19, Dept. xiii (U.P.R.A.A.).

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68. From Capt. T. A. Corbett, Dy. Commissioner of Lullatpoor to Maj. F. W. Pinkney, Commr. of Division, Jhansi, Camp Lullutpoor, 24 Febraury 1862, Commissioner's Office, Jhansi, Box 14, Sl. no. 79, file no. 115, Dept. xxi (U.P.R.A.A.).

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74. From the Police Department, N.W.P., July 1875, Commissioner's Office, Jhansi, Box 16, Sl. no. 116, file no. 141 (U.P.R.A.A.).

75. Pinkney to Fenton, Camp Himmabar, 31 December 1858, N.W.P. Judicial Criminal Proceedings, 10 January 1859, no. 122 (I.O.L.).

76. Thanadar of Islampur reporting from Jalalpur, 22 August 1858, Hamirpur District, Urdu-Persian Records, Basta no. 8, Sl. no. 10, file no. 10 (U.P.R.A.A.).

77. From Tahsildar of Jalaun, 7 September 1858, Jalaun District, Urdu-Persian Records, Basta no. 4, file no. 94 (U.P.R.A.A.).

78. List of villages who joined the rebels, from the Tahsildar of Deva, 30 August 1858; from Debiprasad, Naib Tahsildar, Kunar, 31 Augsut 1858; from the Tahsildar of Jalaun, 7 September 1858, Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun District, Basta no. 4, file no. 94 (U.P.R.A.A.).

Four Rebels of Eighteen Fifty-Seven*

GAUTAM BHADRA

The rebellion began in Chotanagpore with the mutiny of the Ramgarh batallions. But the mutineers were opposed by the Kols who looked upon the plundered treasury as their own and resented its appropriation by the sepoys.[1] Meanwhile, the traditional rivalry between the chiefs of Porahat and Khursawan surfaced at this juncture, and Arjun Singh, maharaja of Porahat, who was to play so confusing a part in the struggle just begun, 'appeared on the scene...vacillating...at one moment acting the part of a loyal feudatory and doing good work for government and the next in rebellion, leagued with the sepoys he had just been opposing'.[2] While he vacillated, pressure built up from below for action. Juggo Dewan and his supporters were preparing for a showdown. A proclamation appears to have been issued in the king's name but without his concurrence. The arrow of war, that traditional method of transmission of war-like messages, began to circulate, defying the warnings issued by the English to the mankis against its use.[3] On 20 November the king was attacked and fled. Juggo Dewan, thought to have been responsible for the attack, was summarily executed by the authorities in the centre of the bazaar at that place 'and his body was left exposed until dark'. By that time 'the character of the Mutiny...had entirely changed', as an official observed, and 'the Sepoy element had disappeared'.[4] The mutiny of the Ramgarh battalions was transformed into a rebellion of the Kols.

Out of this process of transformation Gonoo emerged as a leader. His own perception of that process was recorded thus in his testimony at his trial:

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The whole country was in revolt...All the moondahs and mankis went to the Rajah; I was with them. The Rajah asked us what we were going to do. We replied that the Sahibs have run away and you are now our ruler, we will hold to you. Afterwards, the Rajah called us and said see I have been hunted from Chuckradherpore and Porahat and am now obliged to live in jungles. What will you do? Will you fight for me? We said we would fight and swore to do so. Then he assembled all the *Bhuiyas* and *Dhorrowas* and gave their pay and arms and an army was collected and we went to Ajoodiah with the intention of fighting with Chuckdher Singh of Seraikellah [the traditional rival of the Raja of Porahat].[5]

Apparently the initiative came from below. The people, headed by their chiefs, appealed to the raja to perform his traditional role as a leader of the whole people at a time when the belief had gained ground that the authority of the English had vanished and all the older ties between king, headmen, and people had been revived. The raja on his part asked the subjects for their support and, on obtaining that, ordered armed action to begin. The will of the people thus merged with royal consent, inaugurating the rebellion as a project of the entire community.

Dalton described Gonoo as 'the most active adherent of the ex-rajah of Porahat amongst Singhbum or Larka Kols and the principal agent in spreading disaffection amongst them and the leader of the men of that tribe'. One witness testified that 'during the disturbances of 1857 he was the leader of all the Hoes from Kolehan who joined the rajah', and another that 'his name was in everybody's mouth'. And according to the manki of Barpeer, the Kols who opposed the English army at Seringsaraghaut 'acted under Gonoo's orders'.[6]

It is a leader of the Barpeer Kols that Gonoo first made his name. He was an inhabitant of Jyunteegarh in Barpeer. This area had a tradition of rebellion, and was, according to Dalton, 'one of the most disaffected Peers during the disturbances'.[7] Here, by all accounts, Gonoo mobilized the community: 'the people all acknowledged him as a leader'.[8] As he was to recall later: '...the rajah sent emissaries to Buntrea and Barpeer to collect men...I had come to the Bar Peer and heard from the Kols that they had defeated the sahibs...Then all the Mankees and Moondahs determined to fight again...and we assembled at Seringsara Ghat'.[9]

However, it was at Koordiha that Gonoo established his authority as one of a triumvirate (the others being Raghu Deo and Sham Kurran) who had, for all practical purposes, taken over control from Arjun Singh

when the latter found refuge there after the fall of Porahat. Here the raja was virtually a prisoner in the custody of the rebel army dominated by the Barpeer Kols. He 'had no intention of opposing the Sahibs...but the others used to abuse him for this and say that they will fight'. His feeble-mindedness made him suspected as well as despised by the rebels. He was 'always attended by the *nugdees* (armed guards) placed to look after him', and was 'subjected to great indignities by the people and no one showed him any respect or minded what he said'.[10]

As one of the supreme command of the rebel forces whose authority had replaced the raja's, Gonoo was involved in disciplining traitors and informers. The official policy of making mankis into local agents of the colonial administration had its allurements; a number of them worked as spies and informers to provide the regime with intelligence against the insurgents. Raghu Deo and Gonoo were anxious to wipe them off. Buddo Mahato was killed on an order from them because 'he was suspected of being a *Meriah* [a spy and go between]'.[11]

Gonoo is also known to have used the threat of collective violence in order to enforce co-operation from vacillating elements within the tribal community. The testimony of the manki of Chynepore peer, which remained loyal to the government, offers an interesting example in this respect.

> I am the mankee of Chynepore Peer...He came to my village after bringing Chynepore with a force of coles. There was then in the village, a lot of *suggars* laden with the provision for Chuckerdherpore. The bullock-drivers had fled when they heard of the burning of Chynepore...he ordered me to collect cattle to yoke in *suggars*. He threatened to burn the villages if cattles and coolies were not provided. So to save the village I gave them both...A very large body of insurgents were with Goono on this occasion. They filled the village and were in every house demanding food and drink. Goono was their leader. They all said so, I had not seen Goono before but they said this is Goono our leader, Don't you know him and what he will do to you if you disobey.[12]

'Gonoo our leader'. To be designated thus, Gonoo had to come a long way from his humble beginnings. His father Mata was the moonda of village Chonpattea of Barpeer. Gonoo was a pupil of Chybasa school, 'but when he left the school', said an acquaintance who knew him from his childhood, 'he became poor and took to evil ways, thieving and the like'. And yet another man of his tribe spoke of his murky background: 'He bore a bad character. His father died in jail for rebellion. His brother was hanged'.[13]

It was not unusual for a 'bad character' to emerge as a leader in the course of a peasant revolt. In the Santal *hool* Domon Dakait had been transformed into Domon Darogah, and as recently as in the 1970s the dacoit Rameshar Ahir had become Sadhu Rameshwar, the legendary peasant leader of Bhojpur.[14] The same process which had transformed the sepoy rebellion into an uprising of the masses in Chotanagpore was also what transformed a poor Kol who had taken to 'evil ways'. The *talpatras*, seized by Birch in Kordiha, with their references to the emperor of Delhi, to Nana Sahib and Koer Singh, registered a dim awareness of this process among the tribal population of Singhbhum and a vague expectation of help from those quarters.[15] It was the displacement of authority both at the supra-local level of the colonial regime and at the local level of the Porahat raj that helped to generate among the rebels the sense of an alternative authority and invest a law-breaker from a family of law-breakers with a new legitimacy for his role as a leader. However, even that legitimacy had to justify itself in the name of that very authority which the rebellion was busy undermining. In the days of the insurrection Gonoo was said to have constituted himself as 'chief of Singhbhum', and, 'styled as a mankee', he 'rode about on a horse'. But he claimed to derive the authority that went with such title and carriage from no other source than the raja himself. 'He came to my house', said a witness at his trial, 'with a writing on talpat which he said was an order from the Rajah and he asked us if we [would] obey it and collect men'. And he told someone else that 'he had been appointed sardar in Singhbhum by the Rajah and the Rajah had invested him with a turban and given a horse'. When Gonoo described himself to his captors as 'not a leader', but as 'a mere follower of the Rajah', he was not trying to evade responsibility for his actions, but expressing in his own words the authentic limitations of his political consciousness as a typical Kol rebel of his time.

NOTES

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2. F. B. Bradley-Birt, *Chotanagpore, A Little Known Province of the Empire* (London, 1903), p 220.

3. Dalton to Lushington, 30 September 1859, JP, 27 October 1859, Proc 167, WBSA, para 14. Deposition of Dubroo, son of Sikur, resident of Mouzah

Kossee, Purgunnah Colehan, JP, West Bengal State Archives (Kolkata) [henceforth WBSA]. Birch's letter, 23 November 1857, pp. 625–8. W. Crooke, 'Secret messages and symbols used in India', *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. V, part iv, December 1919.

4. Bradley-Birt, *Chotanagpore*, p. 225.

5. Gonoo's Testimony, JP, May 1864, Proc 30–31, WBSA.

6. Dalton's letter, 15 March 1864, and Evidence of Rainse and Konka, ibid.

7. Dalton to Lushington, 6 September 1859, JP, 29 September 1859, para 4, Proc 55, WSBA.

8. Evidence of Bhogwan, JP, May 1864, Proc 30–31, WBSA.

9. Gonoo's Testimony, ibid.

10. Depositions of Anadhee and Muddo, JP, 27 October 1859, WBSA.

11. Depositions of Dhunno, Sreedhar Mahato, and Madho, JP, ibid.; Examination of Singa, JP, 11 August 1859, Proc 62–63, WBSA.

12. Deposition of Chumro, JP, May 1864, WBSA.

13. Evidence of Konka and Martum, ibid.

14. For a discussion of Domon Darogah's career, see R. Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: 1993), pp. 95–7. For Rameshwar Ahir, see K. Mukherjee and R. Jadav, *Bhojpur: Naxalism in the Plains of Bihar* (Delhi, 1980), pp. 73–8.

15. For these *talpatras* see Appendix A: Abstract translation of the letter writings on the *tal*-leaves found in the village of Koordiha by L. T. Birch, JP, 27 October 1859, WBSA.

The 'Tribals' and the 1857 Uprising*

K. S. Singh

Shut the mouth of slanderers, bite and eat up backbiters, trample upon the sinners, O the destroyer of enemies!
Kill the British, exterminate them, O Mother Chandi!
Let not the enemy escape, nor their wives and children, O Goddess Sanharaka
Show favour to Shankar, support your slave
Listen up the Mlechhas, make no delay
Now devour them, and that too quickly,
O Ghormat Kalika![1]

(*Composed by Gond chief Shankar Shah, Jabalpur*)

The 1857 uprising has largely been studied in terms of the participation in it of sepoys, particularly of the Bengal Army, and the peasants who saw in this event an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and assert their rights, led by the feudal aristocracy which saw its privileges threatened or taken away. The tribals are not mentioned as such in the chronicles of the uprising, but the exploits of the communities known as tribes today, have been documented. While the tribes and peasants demonstrated many similarities in their response to the uprising, there were also significant differences emanating from their social structures and political systems. There was in fact a plurality of responses. The tribes were not only fighting the colonial rulers, the enemy outside, but they also tried to settle scores with the enemies within, the exploiters, the moneylenders, rivals in regional power structure and so on.

*Previously published in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 26, Nos 1–4, January–April, 1998, pp. 76–85. The last paragraph of the essay has been removed. For the complete text see the original version.

The notion of tribes, as we understand it today had not crystallized until the end of the 19th century. The official records referred to the uprising of the communities of such names as the Kol, Bhumij, Santals, Bhils, or the Khonds. However, the very mention of such names suggested the presence at the back of the officials' minds of the communities which were warlike, militant, prone to violence, quick to take offence and rebel, sensitive, remotely situated, 'backward', waiting to be reclaimed to civilization, all the ingredients of the notion of a tribe.

For students of tribal history participation of such communities in the 1857 uprising was the culmination of almost sixty years of their resistance to colonial rule. The tribal movements in this phase from the end of the 18th century to 1857 have been described as primary forms of resistance, elemental, spontaneous, violent, led by tribal chiefs or other chiefs, aimed at overthrowing the colonial authority that destroyed the old system. Most of these characteristics were present in the 1857 uprising.

II

Probably the best known episode of tribal outbreak in 1857 is offered by the Chero-Bogtah combination in Palamau, against the background of the general uprising of *zamindars* and *jagirdars* in Chotanagpur region. The glorious raj of the Cheros had ended in 1814; the Chero jagirdars were unhappy and looked for an opportunity to re-establish their raj. They repeatedly rose in rebellion in 1800, 1817, and 1832. They were particularly suspicious of Rajput-Thakurais who, they thought, had colluded with the British in putting an end to their raj. The British were accused of supporting the Rajput-Thakurai zamindars.

In 1857 the Cheros were joined by Kharwars or Bogtahs. Unlike the Cheros, the Kharwars were largely peasants, and there were very few jagirdars among them. One section (*gosthi* or clan) of these, the Bogahs, occupied a strategically unassailable position in the area lying between the lowlands of Palamau and the uplands of Sirguja and possessed almost inaccessible mountain 'fastness'. They have been described by colonial authorities as lawless free-booters, whose predatory habits were somewhat repressed by the British government conferring the jagir on two brothers, Nalambar and Pitambar Sahi, who shared the headship of the Bogtah clan after the death of their father, 'an out-law'. It is customary for the colonial authorities around this period to describe tribals in such terms.

The mutiny of the sepoys in Ranchi and Hazaribagh was the signal for 'turbulent tribesmen' of Palamau. Pitambar was reportedly at Ranchi at the time of the outbreak of the Ramgarh battle and he regarded the abandonment of the station by the officers to imply the end of the British raj. The return of Pitambar from Racnhi to Palamau and the advance of the Hazaribagh regiment through Palamau towards Rohtas provided the signal to the Bogtahs to 'arm, assemble, and commence plundering'. The two brothers declared themselves independent chieftains.[2]

An important development was the conclusion of the Chero-Bogtah alliance. The last Chero Raja, Churaman Rai, died childless, leaving a widow. There were three collateral branches of the family, represented by Babu Bhavani Bakhsh Rai of Bisrampore, Babu Ram Bakhsh Rai of Chukla, and Babu Devi Bakhsh Rai of Luckna. On 26 September 1857 Babu Bhavani Bakhsh Rai came to Shapur (opposite Daltonganj on the other side of the river Koel), the residence of the widowed Rani. A general meeting of all the Chero chiefs was convened there, either to elect a Chero Raja or to devise measures for the safety of the district. But whatever the purpose of the meeting, it was 'followed by a general rising both of Cheros and of Kharwars'. The first target of attack was Thakuraj Raghubar Dayal Singh, the common object of enmity of both the Cheros and the Bogtahs. The commissioner of Chotanagpur (Captain E. T. Dalton) observed:

> I am convinced that this time the Bogtahs were not so fascinated with the idea of having a Chero dynasty over them as led to join the Cheroes for the sake of gratifying their old grudge against the Thakurai, but it is quite clear that the Cheros and others considered the destruction of the Thakurai and his party as essential to the success of their undertaking, because he was devoted to the interest of the British Government; he felt confident that Government would not be subverted and he opposed himself in every way to the movement in favour of the Cheros.[3]

An economic motive was also at work behind the tribal uprising in Palamau. The Chero rulers had created a class of Chero jagirdars by giving them land. Hence there was a large number of small Chero jagirdars. Being impoverished, they mortgaged their small estates, and they wanted to escape from the inevitable consequences of their improvidence. Capt. E. T. Dalton, the commissioner, held that many proprietors might have joined the insurgents with 'a hope of summarily avoiding such encumbrances'. As Sarkar says,

Just as the Crusades were joined by many a debtor to escape from the clutches of moneylenders of medieval Europe, so the palamau *jagirdars* might have been tempted to join the movement with a similar object. This throws a new light on the genesis of the movement and would show that it had a 'sordid aspect' as distinct from the lofty national impulse of freeing the country from a foreign yoke.[4]

An interesting feature of the Palamau uprising was the attempt by rebels to link up with the Shahabad forces of Babu Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh, as also with the compatriots from Hazaribagh. Palamau's ecology—its extensive forests and natural links with Shahabad explain the rebels attempt to join hands.

Palamau became the haven and refuge not only for the mutinous Hazaribagh companies but also for many Ranchi mutineers after their defeat by Major English in October 1857 and they made common cause with the Bogtah leaders Nilambar and Pitambar, Chero Devi, Bakhsh Rai, and Paramanand of Kunda. During the last days of the year 1857, when the mutineers' cause was on the verge of collapse, the Bogtah chieftains, Nilambar and Pitambar, tried to get armed reinforcements from Amar Singh, brother of Kunwar Singh. After the repulse of the insurgents at the Palamau fort (22 January 1858) by the Commissioner and Lt. Graham, letters addressed to Nilambar and Pitambar Sahai, and Nucleut (Naklaut) Manji were found with the baggage and amongst them communications from Ummer Singh promising immediate assistance form Koer Singh. Though they failed to get it, they were joined by 'a party from the Mirzapore hills' and were thus emboldened to pillage several villages in early January 1858. After the suppression of the movement in Palamau, several mutinous sepoys proceeded to Shahabad district, which was still disturbed. But they were disheartened and disorgnized, and this was not considered to be a potential source of mischief. Further, the dispersion of the Shahbad mutineers was followed by their infiltration into Palamau under Amar Singh Seadha Singh.[5]

To revert to the first outbreak in Palamau which took place within one month of the general meeting of the Cheros at the Shapur palace, the combined Chero-Kharwar-Bogtah forces attacked Chainpur, Shapur, and Leslieganj in quick succession. The attack on Chainpur (21 October 1857) directed against Thakurai Raghubar Dayal Singh and his cousin Thakurai Kishun Dayal Singh was repulsed. At Shapur they captured

four guns of the Rani, attacked the *thana*, destroyed its records and shot a *thana barkandaz* dead. Lesliganj was plundered and its *thana* burnt. By the end of November the situation became very critical, as the whole district of Palamau rose up in arms. Graham was besieged in the 'large' house of Raghubar Dayal, 'encircled any a strong wall' and containing three to four hundred Indian women and children. The rebels at first numbering 2,000 swelled to 6,000 and plundered the neighbourhood, but refrained from assaulting the Thakurai's house either because its defences were strengthened by Graham or for other reasons.[6]

On 27 November 1857 the insurgents (Bogtahs) attacked Rajherwa, the station of the coal company. On 2 December the thanas at Monka and Chutterpore were burnt and all their records destroyed.

The capture of rebel leader Devi Bakhsh Rai marked 'the collapse of the rebellion' in Palamau. The insurgents lost heart. Released from the fear of insurgents the 'well-disposed chiefs', openly joined the British. Thus the rebels had lost some of their most daring leaders who had been taken and hanged and were in jail, and the Cheros for the most part abandoned their cause.[7]

On 22 December the British attacked Palamau fort in three columns, defeated the defending Cheros and Bogtahs, who fled leaving behind guns, ammunition, cattle, supplies, and baggage, and captured some leading insurgents. The same day, the Bogtahs who had formed the bold design of checking the advance of the commissioner at a small *ghat* were attacked and repulsed by major Macdonnell's men, assisted by seven jagirdars. Many Chero jagirdars now joined the British and were prepared to fight against the Bogtahs. The suppression of the Bogtahs, now isolated from the Cheros, became comparatively an easy affair, covering only a fortnight (8–23 February). The retreating Bogtahs fought till the last from behind masked breastworks of stone and ridge. The village of Chemu on the Koel river, and the fortified residence of the Bogtah brothers and Saneya, another neighbouring Bogtah stronghold were destroyed, much grain and cattle were captured. Deserted by their followers, the two Bogtah chiefs became fugitives and eluded the vigilance of the search parties in the hills and jungles. But neither threats nor promises had any effect inducing the influential captives to disclose the hide-outs of their chiefs. While stern measures of reprisal were meted out to the inciters of the movement (for example, destruction of village, seizure of goods and cattle, confiscation of estates), the less guilty followers and the people were sought to be conciliated. Nilambar and Pitambar were

ultimately captured and hanged after trial. Many Chero jagirdars were ambivalent. Some Chero jagirdars were executed.[8]

III

Not all the tibes of Palamau or Ranchi joined the general uprising. The Mundas and Oraons kept aloof from the 1857 uprising which in Ranchi was led by a scion of the Naagvanshi lineage, Bishwanath Nathshah Deo and supported by Jharkhandi Muslims—their leader was a weaver, Sheikh Bhikari, and Hindus. The zamindars attacked the German Mission at Ranchi and persecuted the Christian peasants in villages who had begun to assert their rights as peasants. In fact with the suppression of the Revolt, the tide turned in favour of those peasants who launched the forty years *mulki larai*, the struggle for the land, also known as Sardar movement.[9] The Santals in Hazaribagh had little reason to be sympathetic to the soldiers of the Bengal Army which had crushed their *bul* hardly two years earlier. However, the Santals in Hazaribagh were excited 'by the weakening of authority and thought the occasion opportune for squaring accounts with oppressive moneylenders and others'. The *District Gazetteer* reports that several bands of Santals collected for marauding purposes and were joined by the 'local bad characters', and a certain amount of plundering occurred between Gola and Chas (that is, thana Petarbar) in Kharagdiha, at Kuju on the Ramgarh Road and at Jharpo near Bagodar. At Mandu three local landholders instigated the Santals to commit murder as well as plunder the village. These landholders were subsequently caught and hanged. The administration sent out a small punitive expedition to Gola, and the excitement died down immediately. The officials were satisfied that the disturbances were only sporadic and that there was no organized movement among the Santals as a whole. However, it was decided shortly after the Revolt to raise a levy of Kols and Santals for military police, and a body of 500 of the more ardent aboriginals was enlisted for this work.[10]

The news of the sepoys rising evoked some small uprising among the dispossessed Bhuiya *tikaits*, who considered the opportunity suitable for recovering their lands from the purchasers then occupying them; and they received some support from their tenantry.[11]

The Hos, probably recalling the similar example of being crushed in the Kol insurrection of 1832, refused to extend any support to the soldiers in Chaibasa. In fact when in the beginning of September the soldiers

plundered the treasury and proceeded towards Ranchi to join their compatriots in Ranchi the Hos blocked their way.

The soldiers failed to cross the river Sanjai, then in flood, and the Hos denying the sepoys' right to remove the revenue collected from them, gathered in thousands, cut off all stragglers and harassed them continually. The baffled mutineers were at length only too glad to accept the invitation of Arjun Singh, Raja of Porahat, that they should join him and make over to him the greater part of the money taken from the treasury.[12]

IV

In Central India many *malguzars,* jagirdars, and zamindars joined hands with the soldiers of 52 Regiment as they rose in rebellion at a few places. The Lodhi chieftains of Damoh joined the insurgents. By August 1857, all places north of Narmada were in the hands of freedom fighters. The Gond ruler, Raja Shankar Shah, a Scion of the Garhamall family, composed the opening poem, on receiving the commissioner's proclamation seeking loyalty. He and his son were blown off from the mouth of the guns.

An important uprising was led by the Binghal, a small tribe and its leader Bir Narayan Singh, a jagirdar of Sonakhan. In the year preceding the uprising, Bir Narayan had looted the granaries of a merchant to feed his starving people in a famine year. He had duly informed the authorities but was imprisoned for breaking the law. When the 1857 uprising started, he escaped from the jail to organize a rebellion among his people. Sonakhan turned into a fortress, but he was overpowered by the superior force, surrendered, convicted for treason and hanged on 19 December 1957.

V

In western India, the Bhils were being 'reclaimed to civilization' through a policy package that comprised promotion of cultivation, encouraging Bhils to settle down as full-fledged peasants and raising the Bhil corps. The Bhils in Malwa showed their loyalty to the British by providing shelter and security to the Europeans including the deputy political agent in Sitlamata Caves. The historic tablets on the caves begin with the words, 'When the Bengal Troops in Mhow mutinied in 1857, the deputy Bhil agent was taken to these caves for safety'. The names of the 'faithful Bhils'

are inscribed and the tablets end with the words, 'These tablets were placed here by the orders of the British Government so that their gallantry and faithfulness may not pass out of remembrance'.[13]

The Bhils like the tribes of eastern India such as Santals had not settled down as peasants. The Bhils' depredations could be considered as a form of protest. The Bhils were at large, everywhere indulging in predatory activities along the Bombay-Agra Road. The Bhil insurrection was described as 'outwardly a predatory rising in which the rebel bands took to plunder and loot'. They are even said to have plundered the rich but helped the poor. The Bhils, armed with bows and arrows, and with their knowledge of the terrain could traverse long distances and hide in inaccessible places. They roamed about in small bands and ravaged territories as far as Khandesh. The Raja of Barwani acknowledged the plunder of the villages by the Bhils, but admitted his utter inability to restrain their excesses. In this he was not alone, for other and more powerful chiefs exhibited a similar failing. A Hindi report from the Kamasdar of Brahmangaon, dated 18 August 1857 states that 'this day about sunrise Bhima Naik of Burwani Ilaqa (Barwani State), with some 500 to 700 men came to Mauza Datwara...and plundered it from that time till about 10 or 11 o'clock.' From a report of the same official, dated 5 September 1857, we find that Bhima Naik of Barwani state was committing 'great depredations in that part of the country', spread over the Holkar state, Barwani state, and the Khandesh district, and along the high road to Bombay.

Bhima Naik as the hero of the day. He plundered and rebelled alternately against the Holkar, Barwani state, and the British in the vast tract stretching between the Vindhya and Satpura ranges.

Bhima Naik's letter addressed to Vahiwutdar of Barodh, dated 27 September 1857, shows the astuteness of this rebel leader, As he says,

> I do not go to plunder Mauza Datwara of my own accord, as you suspect. I was ordered by Maharaja Jaswant Singh, the Raja of Barwani, Bhoodhgeer Bawa, and Dowlatsing Mama that I should go and plunder the country within my reach, except Barwani, and was further directed that I should take possession of and plunder Mauza Datwara because he said the village belonged to Barwani. Fifty rupees and a dress of honour were then given to me with instructions to perform the required services. But the Raja did not afterwards support me in the undertaking, and therefore, I have now determined to make aggressions upon his own territories. He now prefers complaints against me to you and himself wishes to stand aloof.

He also holds out a threat,

I have to add that you are not justified in preferring any complaints against me, because I am an old servant of the Raja and acted under his orders. You can claim compensation from the Raja and not from me. I shall encroach upon your districts or else you should make some arrangements for my pay.[14]

Elsewhere the Bhil Naiks were similarly active. In Ahmednagar Bhagoji Naik and Kajar Singh Naik led the Bhils in their depredations spread over two years. They plundered villages, closed down the passes, looted the treasury, and even hired Arab mercenaries to carry out their raids. Kajar Singh was killed two years later by one of his own men.[15]

VI

It is interesting to note the parallels in the responses of the tribals and other sections of Indian society to the 1857 uprising. The rebellions were led by the scions of feudal aristocracy, tribal and non-tribal, who saw in the events of 1857 an opportunity to restore their lost Raj, and free themselves from the clutches of money lenders and other agents of the oppressive Raj. A feudal structure had emerged in many tribal societies, and the indebted and impoverished small tribal jagirdars sought freedom from the dispensation that had brought about their ruin. Secondly, a sizeable body of peasantry or yeomanry, body tribal and nontribal, joined the uprisings. The Bhogata or a section of the Kharwar peasantry under their leaders who, too, were small jagirdars joining hands with the Chero feudal lords was an interesting development. Thirdly, the tribal story differs from the non-tribal in that the tribals had other scores to settle, with the moneylenders, traders, and other enemies who were protected by the British Raj. And so, as the Gond chief's poem shows their wrath was turned against British rule. Lastly there were many forms of tribal protests, depredations being one of them. [...]

NOTES

1. *The History of Freedom Movement in Madhya Pradesh*, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Nagpur, 1956, p. 72.

2. Dr Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, 'The Mutiny of 1857–58 and the Palamau Jagirdars', *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vol. XLI, December 1955, part 4, pp. 529–71.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7.Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. K. S. Singh, *Birsa Munda and His Movement 1874–1901. A Study of Millenarian Movement in Chotanagpur*, Oxford University Press, 1983; K. S. Singh, *Tribal Society in India: An Anthropological Historical Perspective*, Manohar, 1984.
10. E. Lister, *District Gazetteer: Hazaribagh, 1917*, pp. 68–69.
11. Ibid.
12. LSS O'Malley, *District Gazetteer, Singhbhum, 1920*, pp. 38–42.
13. Kushhali Lal Srivastava, *The Revolt of 1857 in Central India in Malwa*, Allied Publishers, 1966.
14. Ibid.
15. James M. Campbell, *Gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency: Khandesh*, Bombay, 1880, pp. 262–3.

Popular Culture and 1857*
Memory Against Forgetting

Badri Narayan

This paper studies the description of the Revolt of 1857 in local traditions, folk lores, and other aspect of popular culture. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part traces the people's memory of the revolt from extant evidence. The second part discusses the process of assimilation of the memory of the event, through symbols and rituals in the folk tradition. The third part includes a detailed review of the contemporary relevance of the popular memory of 1857 in rural society.

The primary data of this paper has been collected mainly from the Bhojpuri region, and the folk lores of Avadhi, Bundeli, and Kauravi have also been studied for purposes of comparison.

I may at first like to clarify that the term popular culture has been used in the paper in the sense of peasant folk cultures.[1]

The colonial narrators, described the Revolt of 1857 as the struggle of sepoys and decadent feudal landlords against the British rulers. They consciously overlooked the dynamic involvement of the people in this struggle. Unfortunately, the colonial narrative has served a pre-eminent part in the construction of our historical past. Indeed, it has to be admitted that several historians have of late studied the Revolt from the perspective of the participants, and the suffering people of India. Yet, their picture can hardly be said to be complete, for it ignores the evidence found in the local sources and folk tradition. Certainly, recent researches have now established that people were unified in their resistance to the British, regardless of religious and taste difference among them.[2] It was a popular mass struggle, so its traces and images are imprinted in the various folk cultures. Its memories were transformed into a stream of

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folk traditions and popular values which are very much a part of village culture alive, even today. The peasants of the regions where the Revolt spread, were so deeply, and actively involved that it became a part of their collective memory.

I

The revolt of 1857, was most active in much of North India. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi were directly involved in this struggle. This struggle is alive even today in the collective memory of the people of the affected regions.

As a result, the revolt is described in many folk tales, ballads, *Panwara* in the folk cultures found in *Kauravi* (Meerut, Delhi) *Avadhi* (Lucknow and Central U.P.) *Braj* (Mathura, Aligarh, Agra, and other places) *Bhojpur* (Bihar and Eastern U.P.), *Baghel* and *Bundel* (Jhansi and M.P.).

For the reconstruction of the history of the castes, communities, and societies, folk lores are now regarded as an important primary source.[3] Without adequate exploration of folk culture, rewriting of people's histories will always be incomplete.[4] D. D. Kosambi in his quest for social and historical truths, made meaningful attempts to analyse popular forms of the cultural behaviour of peoples.[5] The tradition, promoted by him, survives, even today. Outside India, Eugene Weber has reconstructed the history of French peasantry through folk lores and local traditions.[6] In Indian society, folk culture is significantly instrumental in comprehending the peasant society because the every day life of a peasant is reflected in the folk culture, and folk culture itself influences the consciousness of the peasantry. The two are inter-penetrative, a view held by Robert Redfield.[7]

Popular cultures perceived the *Gadar* of 1857 as an attempt of the people (described a 'Balwai' in colonial records) to free their *Mulk* from the rule of the hated English (*Firangis*). The popular perception of people towards the colonisers, as Firangi connotes certain characteristics and features. But interpreting Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Bundeli, and Bagheli folk cultural forms, we get some idea about what they actually meant when they described the English as firangis. A Firangi was perceived by the people as a person who:

a. was fair-skinned (*gora*)
b. was a Looter
c. oppressed our Mulk

d. who ruled over us and enjoyed the power that accrued to it
e. who corrupts our religion and caste.

The folk perception saw 1857 as an attempt towards the liberation of Mulk from the oppressive rule of the 'Firangis'. A Bhojpuri folk song is cited here which expresses the collective feelings of the people:

Ah chhod re firangiya! hamar deswa
Lutpat kaile tuhun, majwa udaile
Kailas, des par julum jor.
Sahar gaon luti, phunki, dihiat firangiya,
Suni suni kunwar ke hridaya me lagal agiya,
Ab chhod re firangiya! hamar deswa

[British, now quit our country, for you loot us, enjoy the luxuries of our country and oppress our countrymen (in return). You have looted and destroyed our cities and villages. Kunwar's heart burns to know all this. O British! now quit our country.]

Popular cultures have perceived the Revolt as an expression of self-sacrifice by the rebels. This sense of self sacrifice is reflected in the form as well as content of folk cultures. A form of folk lore, called *Patia*, which literally means 'letter', is a type of folk lore that invites the people to mobilize in the struggle against the British. It can also be taken as an effective form of a folk medium of communication. The folk songs of Patia tried to motivate people to join the rebels, asking them to make the 'sacrifice of their lives'. It also asks women to be prepared 'to break their bangles, wipe out vermillion from their forehead' (symbolic of widowhood) 'to become *Rand* (widow) for their *Mulk*'. Thus, people were exhorted to make sacrifices for their Mulk through these folk mediums.

When required, the relevant contents were put in this Patia form, and used by masses during various popular mobilizations subsequently.[8] Some lines of a Patia of 1857 Gadar are as follows:

Ba jan ganwai ke nevta,
Churl forwai ke nevta,
Sindoor pocchwai ke nevta,
Jei ho hamar te math del
Jei ho hamar te sath del!

This Patia is an invitation to people to sacrifice their life for their Mulk, and an exhortation to woman to be prepared to break their bangles and to remove vermilion from their forehead. These folk lores represent

the popular mentality of people and present the model of peasant consciousness of society.

Apart from Kunwar Singh, Rani Lakshmibai, and Nana Saheb, the 1857 struggle witnessed many other valiant fighters, the information about whom we find in the sources of folk cultures and local histories. The heroes of 1857 that frequently and prominently appear in the Bhojpuri folk literature are:

1. Amar Singh (Younger brother of Kunwar Singh)
2. Hare Krishna
3. Nishan Singh
4. Ranjit Yadav
5. Zulfikar
6. Maiku Mallah
7. Dharman bi (Woman)
8. Karman bi (Woman)
9. Ibrahim Khan
10. Bansuriyan Baba (Inspirer of Kunwar Singh)
11. Lakhiya (a lower caste woman)
12. Madho Singh
13. Pargat Singh
14. Beni Madho
15. Rajab Ali
16. Miyan Khan

Thus, in folk culture the Revolt of 1857 is not described as a struggle of caste, religion, or specific class. In the popular perception, it is imprinted as war of liberation from foreign oppression, and humiliation. The communal and caste harmony was much evident in this struggle.

Songs of chivalry of many Muslim and lower caste heroes are quite common in the folk lores. One may find Panwara (chivalry songs) of Zulfikar Khan, Ibrahim Khan, Rajab Khan, Umed Ali in Bhojpuri folk lores. Even today, the folk lore about Khudabaksh and Ghaus Khan (the supporters of Lakshmi Bai) are sung with respect. In the folk lore of Bundelkhand many narratives describing the brave deeds of Jhalkhari Bai, a lower caste woman, are available. Further, a deep influence of this Revolt is observed in the lower caste popular cultural forms of *Dhobi*, *Kumhar*, *Luhar*, and such like. Historical narratives of 1857 reveal that lower castes in Bhojpur region were no less involved in this war of

independence. There is a popular *Dhobi Geet* (song), in this region which is cited below to depict the emotional involvement of this deprived caste in 1857:

Mahua ke pedwa, tabai, nik laged,
Jaba mahwari hoae
Ara sabariya tabai nik lage,
Kunwar Singh ke rajwa hoae

(The Mahua tree looks beautiful in its blossoming season, and Arrah town will look beautiful when it is ruled by Kunwar Singh).

Infact, Kunwar Singh's rule in the Bhojpuri folk culture is described as liberation from oppression and foreign thralldom. This belief is found not only among the Bhojpuri people, but is also deeply ingrained in the popular memory of the people in the region between Calcutta and Lucknow, and across Ganges in both directions.

There is an alertness in the folk consciousness against tactical and divisive acts of the British who tried to break people's unity that emerged during this struggle.

One of the folk songs reflecting people's awareness against the deceitful character of the british is cited here.

Tohafa debo, inam debo,
Tah ke raja banalb re!
Firangiya re!
Mose na chali tor chaturai.

(O Firangis! your awards, felicitations, may make a person favourably disposed towards you but you cannot allure me in your deceptive designs).

The folk consciousness contains much of hatred against those who deceived Kunwar Singh and supported the Firangis during the national resurrection. Thus, the 'Maharaja of Dumaraoii' is a hated personality in the folk lore of the region.

Bhojpur mein dumarao basela,
Uho bade firangriya nu
Sub visen mili gharmen lukaile
Babu parela akele nu.

[The kasba Dumaraon is in Bhojpur wherein many British reside. All the *Visens* (a clan of Rajputs) hide in their homes and Kunwar Singh is left alone]

This shows that one should not assume people's consciousness as inert and passive, but in the context of 1857, it was in fact organized, committed, and involved in conscious mass mobilization.

II

The continuum of folk consciousness assimilates cultural and historical memories within it to make it alive. These memories get included in the cultural practice of people through popular tradition. People maintain alive only those memories which have a relevance for their life. The contemporaneousness of the past provides reference points for the recurrence of concerned memory. Many values are reflected by these popular traditions and people relate themselves to these values. The values that emerged from 1857 war of independence, infact provide the relevance of the event in the contemporary life. By these popular traditions, the memory of the unfinished tasks of this struggle is emphasized in the psyche of common people. The narratives, the memories and the values of the 1857 war, have become the part of folk tradition which remains alive, and are practised even today. Take, for example, the following three instances.

1. There is a tradition of preapring *Peetha'* in Bhojpuri folk culture on the occasion of Godhan. Peetha' is a food item prepared with soaked and then ground, pulses and rice. But in the nearby Jagdishpur and *Sabar*, parts of Bhojpur region, this Peetha' is called *Amarpeetha*. A narrative is linked with Amarpeetha. According to it, 'on the day [of Gudhay] eating Amarpeetha is customary because Amar Singh, the younger brother of Kunwar Singh, went for the war without eating it and was defeated. There is a folk belief that if he had gone to war after eating Amarpeetha, he would have won the battle.

Through this ritual, Bhojpuri filk culture expresses its anguish at the defeat of Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh in the war. Along with it, it also expresses the wish for the victory of the coming generations in future struggles.

2. In the Bhojpuri region too, during, the *Phalgun* month of Indian calendar, *Holi* is celebrated as a festival of joy. Outside the door of every house, rural people sing songs, beating *Dhol* and *Baja*. But in this region a mournful song is also sung during this joyful festival. In this song it is stated that all celebrations have no meaning until Kunwar Singh becomes the king. 'Without Kunwar Singh this festival of joy is fragile. True joy lies in the liberation of people'. The return of the rule of Kunwar Singh means here liberation of people in the domain of Kunwar Singh.

3. *Sohar* is a ritual song which is generally sung by women during the ceremony arranged at birth of a child. It is a part of the popular tradition of *Samskara* or birth rites of children. In the Bhojpur region, there is a popular Sohar sung by women, with great involvement. This Sohar contains the memory of 1857 in these words:

Bhado mas andheria, badariya gagan ghere ji,
Tahl rate challe, Kunwar Singh lare laraiya ji.
(It was a Bhadon month; night and dark clouds were covering over the sky when Babu Kunwar Singh went to war, at the end of the night).

In fact, through such recurrence of the narrative of a historical event, the folk tradition transforms the event into popular memories. In this way, a historical memory is created, which operates like a samskara of the people at cathartic moments in contemporary happenings.

III

The great event of 1857 is an integral part of people's memory. People want to preserve and make alive the memories through *Vak* (oral tradition), *Drish* (visual), and *Krit* (contemporary every day form of resistance).[9] Vested interests attempt to erase the memories from the people's mind and to transplant false memories, which serve their political ends. For this, they use all available medium of communication, words, phrases, and the army of intellectuals.[10] But power is able to transform memories of only those communities which are unable to resist the counter-memories created by the vested interests. Many communities have been able to keep alive their original memories of 1857 in remote rural areas. These are transmitted from generation to generation and are preserved and kept alive through folk tales, folk lores, symbols, specific rituals, and certain popular narratives. The memories of 1857 preserved in folk culture represent the everyday form of resistance of past by the people.[11]

The landed and feudal forces of this region also attempted to manipulate the memories of 1857 in their own way. Selecting some of them suitable to their interests, they proceeded to propagate these memories through their own cultural media. It is worth mentioning that feudal forces have produced many folk singers and created many folk dramas which serve their ideological interests. By interpreting and reconstructing the past in accordance with their respective predicament,

they have constructed the feudal version of history.[12] But people want to retain the popular memories of 1857 continuously flowing in the folk culture.

In the Bhojpuri folk culture, memories of 1857 are available in oral as well as visual forms. By combining visual texts with oral narratives these are made more powerful. Couple of examples should make the issue clear.

DUSADHI BADHAR

There is a small piece of land lying between Jagdishpur and Piro which is known as Dusadhi Badhar. A story is attached to this piece of land. The story tells that once Kunwar singh was passing from this place with his soldiers. Some *Ropinbarine* (females engaged in plantation) were engaged in planting of rice in the muddy fields. It was the Phalgun month. One of those women was *Phulia*, belonging to *Dusadh* caste. A woman asked her to throw some mud on Kunwar Singh. Phulia replied that since she came from Jagdishpur, Kunwar Singh was like a brother to her. Kunwar Singh was so impressed by her reply that he made her the owner of that piece of land.

From then on this *Badhar* (a small piece of land) is known as *Dusadhi Badhar*, because Phulia was from *Dusadh* caste.[13]

MUDKATAWANALA

There is a water drain (Nala) near Shivpur in Balia districts which is called *Mudkatwa Nala*. A folk narrative is linked with this drain. The story goes that under the leadership of Siddha Singh, from Shivpur who was one of the reliable warriors of Kunwar Singh, the rebels killed one hundred British soldiers and dumped their corpses in this drain.

Similarly, we can find many such places in Easter U.P. and Bihar which tell the story of the first war of independence of 1857 and people remember the eventful year whenever they see them. Through such mediums they keep alive the memories of 1857, preserving the values of this great event in history.

The Revolt of 1857 took the form of a popular struggle, and so its memories have become an integral part of our popular culture and folk tradition, containing a number of images which repeatedly enliven the past. To memorize the history of 1857, the people used all the three

mediums of folk remembrance that is, Vak (oral), Drish (visual symbols), and Krit (rituals forms). Probably, people want to keep alive these memories because they believe that the tasks of 1857 are still unfinished.

NOTES

1. That popular culture is distinct from high or learned culture, is suggested in Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London, 1970.

2. Marx in his writing on India argued that the revolt involved the masses, and was not a mere initiatory mutiny. Other works that have studied the people's initiative on the revolt include, P. C. Joshi (ed.), *Rebellion 1857*, Calcutta, 1957; Badri Narayan, *Lok Sanskriti Mein Rashtraysad*, New Delhi, Radhankrishana, 1996.

3. E. P. Thompson, 'Folklore, Anthropology and Social History', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 11, no. 1, January 1997 and Eugene Weber, *Peasants in Frenchmen: The modernisation of Modern France (1870–1930)*, underlined the importance of folk lore to understand the folk societies.

4. Nihar Ranjan Roy, *Bangla Itihas, Lekhak Samvay Samiti*, Calcutta, 1966, and Maurice Aymard, and Harbans Mukhia (eds), *French Studies in History*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1988, provide the theoretical background for this statement.

5. D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1975, Also see his *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962.

6. Eugene Weber, *Peasants in Frenchmen*.

7. Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*, University of Chicago Press, 1956.

8. See P. C. Joshi (ed.), *Rebellion 1857*, Calcutta, 1957.

9. See my unpublished paper, 'Memory and Social Protest', presented at the Seminar on 'Culture, Communication and Power' organized by Centre de Sciences Humaines, Embassy of France, 21–23 April 1997.

10. Ngugi wa Thongo, *Bhasha Sanskriti Aur Rashtriya Asmita*, New Delhi: Scransh, 1994.

11. See James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Havan: Yale University Press, 1985; and Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, New Delhi: Rupa, 1990.

12. H. L. Senviratne, *Identity, Consciousness and the Past*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

13. This narrative is recorded in Jagdishpur, narrator Sheo Muni of Jagdishpur, Bhojpur, Bihar.

The Mentality of the Mutiny*
Conceptions of the Alternative Order in 1857

Rajat Kanta Ray

THE NATURE OF THE MUTINY

> May all the enemies of the faith be killed to-day
> The Feringhis be destroyed, root and branch!
> Celebrate the festival of the Eed-Kurban by great slaughter;
> Put our enemies to the edge of the sword—spare not!
>
> [*Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar*][1]

> Kill the English, Mother destroyer! Destroy them altogether
> Mother Chandi! Let him not live—the enemy!
> Protect your offspring, Mother Destroyer! Protect Shankar!
> Sustain the poor one—your own devotee!
>
> [*Raja Shankar Shah, Gond Chief*][2]

The spirit of the Mutiny was embodied in a collective mentality: a blend of fear and outrage gripped the minds of the sepoys of the Bengal Army and communicated itself, as if by an electrical impulse, to the villages and towns of Hindustan from where they had been recruited. Where that particular mentality, or temperament, did not grip the people—and this was so both in the Punjab and in Bengal at the opposite ends of Hindustan—the mutinies in the cantonments did not ignite rebellions in either town or country.[3] In Hindustan, on the contrary, the popular mood was finely attuned by bonds of kinship and mental sympathy to the mood of the sepoys. Here, as nowhere else, a particular mentality coalesced diverse grievances into a comprehensive challenge to the hated

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English rule, and this was accompanied by coherent notions of an alternative form of government.

What was the mentality that lay behind the formidable insurrections in the cantonments, towns, and villages of Hindustan?[4] and what were the contours of the alternative political and social order constructed by the mutinous crowds and sepoys in that stretch of territory?

The rebellion indicated the people's realization that the mutinies in the cantonments had brought forth a keenly desired but wholly unexpected reversal in the relations of power. The natives of Hindustan had experienced the English regime as a race rule in which power and privilege lay with the sahibs, their women, and their children.[5] The rule of the white race, as *The Times* correspondent accompanying the vengeful English soldiers to Lucknow saw so clearly, was based on force. 'That force is the base of our rule', wrote W. H. Russell in his private diary of 14 February 1858. 'I have no doubt; for I see nothing but force employed in our relations with the governed.'[6] All of a sudden and without the slightest warning, the people's outrage at racial subordination imposed by superior physical force, and the associated fear of emasculation and abasement arising out of the necessity of having to submit to it, found cataclysmic release. The breaking forth of the pent-up emotions of the coerced people of Hindustan was fuelled by the sudden sense of the reversal of the relations of power—a sense that the world had turned upside down, and that their turn had now come to exercise force upon those who had hitherto coerced them. It is no accident that on the eve of the outbreak, proclamations appeared in Lucknow in Hindu, Urdu, and Persian, calling upon the Hindus and Musalmans to exterminate all Europeans: 'These proclamations, there is reason to believe, are written by people in the city—the scum of the populace who like the Scottish robber, would like to see the world turned upside down...'[7]

Shortly afterwards, white men, women, and children perished in Cawnpore; and from the English point of view, the peculiar aggravation of the massacre, as Russell recorded in his diary, was that 'the deed was done by a subject race—by black men who dared to shed the blood of their masters'.[8] He added perceptively: 'Here we had not only a servile war and a sort of jacquerie combined, but we had a war of religion, a war of race, and a war of revenge, of hope, of some national promptings to shake off the yoke of a stranger and to establish the full lower of the native chiefs, and the full sway of the native religions.' Russell's insight

enables him not merely to see the reversal of the power relationships hitherto obtaining between the white rulers and their black subjects, but to grasp the idiom of faith through which the sense of reversal expressed itself. The proclamations issued in Lucknow on the eve of the outbreak had denounced all who remained passive as 'born of the pigs of Europeans, born of cows, despised by the Gods, hated and spat at by all true sons of Mahabeer Jee, and of Mahomed'.[9] What is of interest here is that the combination of the black subjects against the white rulers is ideologically conceived, not in terms of a nation asserting its independence of colonial rule, but in terms of the Hindus and Muslims jointly asserting the sway of their respective religious creeds against the hated Christian 'Nasara' (Nazarenes).[10]

Was there, then, a true sense in which the Mutiny could be called, as indeed Jawaharlal Nehru (and thirty years before him V. D. Savarkar) called it, 'a war of Indian independence'? Why did he say this despite his careful qualification that 'Nationalism of a modern type was yet to come'?[11] It must be remembered, for the clarity of the argument here, that patriotism is a far older phenomenon than modern day nationalism. The resistance of the Greek city states to the Persian invasion, the crusade of Joan of Arc against the aliens from across the English Channel, and the uprising of the people of Delhi against the Iranian troopers of Nadir Shah, all exhibit patriotism in various antique forms.[12] Patriotism signifies that spontaneous desire for independence from alien rule which, in all human societies, must long precede the modern concept of national unity embodied in the sovereign national state. The patriotism of those who mutinied in 1857 expressed itself in the specific form of a combined religious crusade.

Unlike the Indian National Congress of 1885, or even the contemporary members of the British Indian Association who denounced the Mutiny so vehemently, the rebels of 1857 belonged to a society that had no political notion of national sovereignty. Devoid of that notion, they were thrown back upon 'the full power of the native chiefs, and the full sway of the native religions'. Even so, it would be unduly simplifying matters to dwell on the chiefs and religions alone; for the people's power that surged through these old methods of mobilization invested the apparent restoration of the chiefs with a content that was no longer the true substance of the old regime. Indeed, what the Congress leaders later called 'the Indian nation', the rebel leaders already spoke of distinctly as

'the Hindus and Musalmans of Hindustan'. Interestingly Rabindranath Tagore, who was mentally close to the age, used the same expression—'all the Hindus and Musalmans of Hindustan felt a rush of hot blood'—in a Mutiny story written in 1898, though by then the term 'Indian nation' had been familiarized by Congress agitation.[13]

Outwardly, it might indeed appear as if everywhere the ancient supremacies that the British had overthrown were once again coming into their own. To that extent, as Jawaharlal Nehru saw it in the later perspective of a socialist age, the rebellion was 'a feudal outburst'; one led by feudal chiefs and their followers, albeit inspired by the widespread popular sentiment against foreign rule.[14] Even so, the question that arises is how substantive was the 'restoration'? After all, the old supremacies had disappeared without a trace in large parts of the Doab, necessitating, as we shall see, all sorts of improvisations by the rebel crowds of Cawnpore, Allahabad, Bulandshahr, and elsewhere in the selection of chiefs. Even where the surviving remnants of overthrown supremacies were more clearly marked, as in Awadh, Rohilkhand, and Bundelkhand, there were keen struggles for succession to the departed British magistrates, restoration being by no means automatic. What is more important, the restored chiefships had to come to terms with the sepoy councils that were then the most organized embodiment of the people's power.

This was so because the mutiny of the sepoys lay at the very heart of the people's rebellion.[15] It was, indeed, its most democratic part. Eric Stokes, breaking through the false distinction between the mutiny and the popular rebellion, puts the matter succinctly: 'In a real sense the revolt was essentially the revolt of a peasant army breaking loose from its foreign master.'[16] It was however more than that. The sepoy was not simply a peasant in uniform: when he donned the uniform, he acquired a perspective wider than the little world of the typical villager. Peasant rebellions before 1857, and indeed subsequently (until they were linked to the Congress in the 1920s), tended to be spatially restricted insurrections based on ties of kinship and locality. The 2,00,000 strong native army, as the journalist Karl Marx commented during the Mutiny in the *New York Daily Tribune*, was the 'first general centre of resistance which the Indian people was ever possessed of'.[17] The sack of potatoes as Marx described the peasantry, thereby acquired a hard, pointed spearhead. They strained towards a form of government that was indeed neither libertarian nor egalitarian, but which nonetheless accommodated

a curiously republican-democratic component within its hierarchical, princely structure.[18]

The restored 'feudal' chiefships of 1857 could not thus be likened to the old regimes of the eighteenth century. Behind the reassertion of Mughal legitimacy lay the entire force and dynamism of a people who had risen in the mass. At the instinctual level of the collective mentality, it was the violent protest of a black subject people against their white oppressors. They provoked a vengeful master race who, in retaliation, unleashed the most naked race war that the world was to see in the nineteenth century. It was not, however, the rebels who put the struggle in terms of a war between in the races: that was, distinctively, the language of the masters.[19] Although the mutinous crowds and sepoys gave vent to racial antipathy in word as well as deed, this was not the most typical expression of their considered thinking. At the level of conscious thought, they clothed the underlying race war in the ideological garb of a struggle between the true religions and the false one.[20] It was, in their view, a struggle of the Hindus and Muslims against the Nazarenes—not so much because the latter were supposed to be determined to impose the false doctrine of the Trinity, but because the identity of 'the Hindus and Muslims of Hindustan' was being threatened by the moral and material aggrandizement of the arrogant imperial power.[21] The joint brotherhood of the religions expressed, in so far as they were capable of expressing it, the instinctive feeling that the native subject race constituted one people[22] as against the white Christian rulers. The inchoate sense of the nation embedded in the mass psychology and expressed in terms steeped with religion was the dynamic factor that invested the restoration of the vanished supremacies of the eighteenth century with a new meaning.

Conceptually, then, the Mutiny is a peculiarly difficult phenomenon to define: a war of the races that was not a race war because the subject race conceived it as a war of religion; a religious war that cannot be called truly and purely a war of religion because what was being opposed was not the creed of the master race but their political domination; as such, then, neither a war of race, nor a war of religion, but a patriotic war of the Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, or the inchoate social nationality of Hindustan; yet not a national war either. It was all these things and therefore none of them: the product of a mentality rooted in the past, yet forced to reckon with the dynamic world of the nineteenth century. The truth after all is that while the rebels spoke of a war or restoration,

their actual proceedings groped falteringly towards finding an effective alternative to the technologically advanced regime of the British. Racially abused by the superior colonial power, they sought to meet the challenge by developing a new sense of identity: the idea of a political community couched in terms of two combined religions. In doing so, they tragically fell short of conceiving and realizing the only effective alternative to the bureaucratically organized imperial power, that is, the sovereign national state. Circumstances forced upon the mutineers, as upon their contemporaries the Taipings, the need to envisage a brave new world with an outlook belonging to the shattered past.

In the strain of the effort, they produced an inchoate, indeterminate cosmos: not in the true sense traditional, but hardly one capable of coping with the challenges of the modern world. Their languages was not the language of 'revolution', for which no word existed them.[23] They spoke, instead, of 'government', of the legitimate Mughal sovereign, of restoring the rightful chiefs of Hindustan to their respective positions.[24] As far as they were concerned, the English were the rebels, not they.[25] The Mutiny constitutes the great disjuncture in the development of the Indian nation: it is not a part of the national movement, nor is it the dying throes of the old order. The best term for it is the one used by the mutineers themselves: the 'war'[26] of 'the Hindoostanis' (or alternately 'the Hindus and Musalmans of Hindustan')[27] to protect their '*dharma*' and '*deen*' and to 'save the country'.[28] In other words, the patriotic war of a people who expressed their sense of national identity in terms of the attributed brotherhood of the two principal religious communities of a single land.

What we have here is a foetal national community with a mentality opposed to the civil society that was already appearing in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Common racial abasement had produced in Hindustan a sense of reactive oneness untouched by the modern doctrine of national sovereignty and steeped in a mentality that could only express the struggle in the older language of restoring the chiefs and reinstating the religions. All the same the political vocabulary underwent an important modification when the foetal nationality coined the significant expression 'Hindus and Musalmans of Hindustan',[29] to articulate itself. No less significant were the constitutional changes arising from the process of reconstituting authority. The sepoy council, that new embodiment of the people's power, modified the working of the older institutions—the

legitimate Mughal sovereign and the rightful country chiefs—in such a manner that the political order of the Mutiny could be likened neither to the integrated bureaucratic Mughal empire of the seventeenth century, nor to the squabbling federation of the eighteenth century chiefs. The idea of popular authority embodied in the joint rule of the two religions ('the two religions govern')[30] and the act of exercise of power by the elected council of the sepoys ('the command belongs to the sipahi bahadur)[31] amounted together to an unprecedented expression of the power derived in 1857 from the people's will, and there was no question of reconstituting it entirely in the manner of the past. Incapable of generating a new world, imprisoned within a fragmented, timeworn cosmos, yet strenuously driven by circumstances to reorder the fragments into a different, unfamiliar constellation, the Mutiny was at once a 'traditional resistance movement'[32] and a movement unrecognizable to tradition.[33]

The dialectic of the Mutiny moved through a process of dual inversion that took the world back to the past and yet did not leave it as it had been then. The frightened message of a white man from Lucknow that the scum of the populace were determined to turn the world upside down, did not accurately represent the popular point of view; to the rebels' way of thinking, the white men had turned the world upside down, and they were merely turning it back.[34] However, too much shattering had occurred in the course of these multiple inversions for the older cosmos to be restored in its original outline. The alien regime, by threatening the popular religious identities embedded in the old political order, had forged them into a national religious front, and had made it explicit in a manner not known before. The idea that 'the two religions govern'—a slogan counterpoised by the sepoys to the claims of the Rani of Jhansi[35]—was an implicit check upon the legitimate authority of the restored chiefs. The old chiefships had been tried and found wanting against the onslaught of the colonial power and would now have to be buttressed by the sepoy army. In popular memory the mutiny was always remembered as a chaotic struggle that, in attempting to restore the old regime, altered and distorted its shape fundamentally. Thus, Abdul Halim Sharar, born in Lucknow after the Mutiny, recreated the event in the following terms:

> At the time Birjis Qadar, with the royal consort, Hazrat Mahal, had become the effective ruler in Lucknow. The authority of Birjis Qadar was acknowledged, coins were issued in his name, officials were appointed to the State, taxes began to be collected, and the siege [of the Residency] itself was continued only as a sort of

pastime. People praised the efficiency and good intentions of the Queen, who had great regard for the soldiery and would reward them highly for their work and prowess. But to what avail? It was impossible for her to discard her purdah and become commander-in-chief of the army. Her advisers were bad and her soldiers useless. Everyone was a slave to his own desires and no one agreed with what anyone else said. The mutineers of the British army were so arrogant that they thought that everything happened by their grace and considered themselves the true rulers and the only 'king-makers'.[36]

The sepoys, the people, the community, were sovereign: hence the coinage, 'Hindus and Musalmans of Hindustan'.

NOTES

1. Celebrating Id at Jumma Masjid by sacrificing a sheep instead of a cow, Bahadur Shah composed the above verse, and sent it to General Bakht Kha, commander of the mutinying forces in Delhi. *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*, translated from the originals by the late C. T. Metcalfe, London, 1898, Narrative of Munshi Jeewan Lal, diary of 2 August 1857, p. 177.

2. The British arrested the pensioned Gond raja Shankar Shah residing near Jabalpur for plotting with the sepoys and blew him from a gun. Part of the case against him rested on a Hindi prayer written by him on the back of a British proclamation calling upon the chiefs to be loyal. The relevant Hindi verse reads:

संद्यरका मार अंगरैज रेज कर देइ मात
चंडी बचै नही वैरी—
बाल बच्चे संद्यारका सकर की रक्षा कर
दास प्रतिपाल कर दीन की!

For the full text of the original poem and a translation by Commissioner W. C. Erskine of Jabalpur, see *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh: Source Material*, Publications Bureau, Uttar Pradesh, 1957 (henceforth *FSUP*), Vol. III, pp. 136–7. The translation above is mine as Erskine made some errors, in particular mistaking the Sanskrit '*deen*' (poor) for the Arabic '*deen*' (religion).

3. Mutinies occurred in Bengal (Barrackpore, Berhampur, etc.) and the Punjab (Ambala, Peshawar, etc.), but the sepoys of the Bengal Army were aliens among the population in both provinces. Among the Punjabis and Sikhs, the sepoys from Awadh were known as the 'Purbeahs', strangers from the east, who had fought for the English and had occupied their country. The Frontier tribesmen were frequently up in arms against the English, but so vast was the mental gap between these Afghan tribes and the Purbeahs, that despite an approach from the latter to the Akhund of Swat, the Pathans were convinced that the English were the winning side, and thus the British were able to replace the disaffected

Purbeah garrison by Pathan recruits. In the Punjab plains the Jat and Sikh agriculturists exhibited a complete indifference to the rebel Hindustan sepoys, helping on occasion to round them up. To keep the civil population in check, the British found it sufficient to deport the disaffected 'Hindustanis', and in particular to round up the 'Hindustani fanatics' on the Frontier. Ludhiana seems to have been the one prominent town where the discontents of certain unstable groups—Kabul refugees, Kashmiri artisans, and Muslim Gujars—coalesced with the rebellious mentality of the Hindustani garrison at the fort, causing an uprising in the town. In Bengal too, discontent among the indigo ryots against the planters broke out soon afterwards, but here there was no link at all with the rebellious mentality in Hindustan. The educated people and zamindars helped the ryots against the planters, but they had no sympathy with the mutineers. Their mind, profoundly influenced by the West, shrank from the obscurantism and violence of the Hindustani sepoys. See J. H. Kaye, *A History of the Great Revolt*, Vol. II, reprint Delhi, 1988, pp. 436, 472–80, 493–4, and 506–7.

4. Hindustan, in the narrower sense, was the land of Hindi bounded by the Punjab to the west, Bengal to the east, the Vindhyas, and the Deccan to the south. The Deccan, or '*Dakkan*' (South), was itself a term defined in relation to Hindustan. When the young Maratha Brahman, Vishnubhat Godase, set out from the Deccan on his journey to Hindustan on the eve of the Mutiny, his father lamented: 'Hindustan is very far away (*Hindusthāna phāra dūra āhe*). The road towards it is troublesome and full of dangers. The people there drink bhang and the women are bewitching. Moreover, you are not learned in the ways of the world. Because of these reasons, it is not my wish that you should go to Hindustan.' Vishnubhata Godase Varsaikar, *Mājhā Pravāsa*, B. B. C. V. Vaidya, (ed.), Pune, Marathia, 1st edn 1948, 2nd edn 1970, p. 5. At the same time, however, the term Hindustan was used in 1857 in the wider sense of the whole country (Hindi). It was the latter sense in which Feroz Shah of the Mughal royal family used it when he issued the proclamation of 18 February 1858 from Bareilly: 'Be it known to all Hindoos and Mussulmans of Hindoostan, that power and domination are one of the greatest blessings of providence and that this blessing cannot long be enjoyed by a deceitful tyrant.' *FSUP*, Vol. V, p. 376.

5. Sixty-five miles further up from Allahabad, W. H. Russell, *The Times* correspondent, saw a curious and revealing scene which he recorded in detail in his diary of 11 February 1858: 'Under a grove of trees, filled with green parrots, and vultures, and buzzards, were pitched a few tents, which represented the station. ... A luxurious little baby was carried forth for a walk under the shade of the trees; it was borne in the arms of a fat ayah, beside whom walked a man, whose sole business it was gently to whisk away the flies which venture to disturb baby's slumbers. Another man wheeled a small carriage, in which lay another little lord of the Indian creation, asleep, likewise with his human flapper by his side,

whilst two ayahs followed the procession in rear; through the open door of the tent could be seen the lady mother reading for her husband; a native servant fanned her with a handpunkah; two little terriers, chained to a tree, were under the care of a separate domestic. A cook was busy superintending several pots set upon fires in the open air, a second prepared the curry paste, a third was busy with plates, knives, and forks. In the rear of the servants' tents, which were two in number—making, with the master's, four—were two small tents for the syces, grass-cutters, and camel-men, or doodwallahs, behind which were picketed three horses, three camels, and a pair of bullocks, and ere we left, another servant drove in a few goats, which were used for milking. I was curious to know who this millionaire could be, and was astonished to learn that it was only Captain Sith, of the Mekawattee Irregulars, who was travelling down country, with the usual train of domestics and animals required under the circumstances.' William Howard Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, Michael Edwards (ed.) (London, 1957), pp. 26–7.

6. A little later Russell gives an example—a white ganger nearly beating railway coolies to death: 'There were a number of coolies sitting idly under the shadow of a wall: suddenly there came upon them, with a bound and a roar, a great British lion—his eyes flashing fire, a tawny mane of long locks floating from under his pith helmet, and a huge sticks in his fist—a veritable Thor in his anger. He rushed among the coolies, and they went own like grass, maimed and bleeding. I shouted out of the gharry, "Good Heavens, stop! Why, you'll kill those men!" One of them was holding up his arm as if it was broken.' Russell was not unaware of the fact that European rule could not have continued without native collaboration and that the whites would have been quite exterminated had the natives all been hostile: 'Our siege of Delhi would have been quite impossible, if the rajahs of Patiala and of Jind had not been our friends, and if the Sikhs had not recruited our battalions, and remained quite in the Punjab. The Sikhs at Lucknow did good service; and in all cases our garrisons were helped, fed, and served by natives, as our armies were attended and strengthened by them in the field. Look at us all here in camp this moment! Our outposts are native troops—natives are cutting grass for and grooming our horses, feeding the elephants, managing the transport, supplying the Commissariat which feeds us, cooking our soldiers' food, cleaning their camp, pitching and carrying their tents, waiting on our officers, and even lending us money. The soldier who acts as my amanuensis declares his regiment could not live a week but for the regimental servants, dooly-bearers, hospital-men, and other dependents.' Yet Russell was keenly aware, unlike many Anglo-American historians today who look upon the British imperium as the outgrowth of the collaboration of natives, that the dividing line between the rulers and the subjects was extremely sharp, and that force underlay the

collaboration: 'I am deeply impressed by the difficulty of ruling India, as it is now governed by force, exercised by a few who are obliged to employ natives as the instruments of coercion.' Russell, *Diary*, pp. 37, 284–5, and 150–1. After all, what was it that drove princes and the people to help the English in retaking the towns of Hindustan, and in slaughtering their kinsmen? For the princes, it was the knowledge that they would lose their patrimony if they did not back the winning side. For the people, it was, as Surendra Nath Sen points out, abject poverty and not avarice that induced them to serve the British in the lines at the risk of life: they risked their lives for 'a mess of pottage'. Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (New Delhi, 1957), p. 104. Coercion does not habitually operate through the actual exercise of brute force: the threat of it, or the need to earn the means of livelihood (engrossed and controlled by the coercive power), are sufficient to ensure 'collaboration'. The basic truth that British rule in India was a race regime based on naked force in relations with the governed has been obfuscated by the now defunct Cambridge School, and more recently by the *New Cambridge History of India*.

7. Extracts from a letter from Lucknow to Calcutta dated 29 May 1857 (a couple of days before the outbreak), published in the *Bengal Hurkaru and Indian Gazette*, *FSUP*, Vol. II, p. 8.

8. Russell, *Diary*, pp. 29–30.

9. Letter from Lucknow, 29 May 1857, *FSUP*, Vol. II, p. 8.

10. That is how the Mutineers referred to the British. Evidence of Hakim Ahsan Ullah, *The Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah*, H. L. O. Garrett (ed.) (Govt of Punjab, 1932), p. 264.

11. Referring to the support the British received from the Sikhs, Jawaharlal Nehru remarked that 'there was a lack of nationalist feeling which might have bound the people of India together'. Clearly, Nehru, in full awareness of the complexities of 1857, carefully chose the words 'a popular rebellion and a war of Indian independence'. Jawaharlal Nerhu, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta, 3rd edn, 1947), pp. 268–7.

12. Susobhan Sarkar, 'Views on 1857', in Susobhan Sarkar, *On the Bengal Renaissance* (Calcutta, 1979), p. 119.

13. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Durasha' (1898), in *Rabindra Rachanavali* (1961 edn), Vol. VII, p. 339. The point here is not about the unity and harmony between the two communities—there was much tension between them in 1857—but the groping expression of national identity through a religious formula.

14. Nehru, *Discovery*, pp. 268–9.

15. This is the most important argument in Eric Stokes's unfinished work, *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Rebellion of 1857* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1986), chaps 1 and 2.

16. Ibid., p. 14.

17. Karl Marx, 'The Revolt in the Indian Army', *New York Daily Tribune*, 15 July 1857, reproduced in *The First Indian War of Independence* (Moscow, 1975), pp. 36–7.

18. Jawaharlal Nehru, while writing upon the Mutiny in jail with only Kaye's work as his source, does not seem to have been aware of the sepoy councils and their role in the Mutiny administration (a topic Kaye did not cover in his great unfinished work). His information, limited at the time, led him to believe that the princes, chiefs, and their feudal retainers provided the only framework of organization during the popular rebellion, and hence he wrote that the revolt 'brought out all the inherent weakness of the old regime which was making its last despairing effort to drive out foreign rule. The feudal chiefs had the sympathy of the masses over large areas, but they were incapable, unorganized and with no constructive ideal or community of interest. They had played their role in history and there was no place for them in the future. ... There was hardly any national and unifying sentiment among the leaders and a mere anti-foreign feeling coupled with a desire to maintain their feudal privilege, was a poor substitute for this.' Nehru, *Discovery*, p. 269. With more information at our disposal now, it is possible to give an account of some of the more novel aspects of the Mutiny mentality and government. This will be attempted here, with a view to showing that the Mutiny, while certainly not 'modern', was not quite 'traditional' in the proper sense of the term.

19. Russell records in his *Diary*, 4 March 1858: 'Had a large party at mess, many of whom had been in recent 'dours', and I heard a good deal of "potting pandies", and "polishing-off niggers"', p. 67. 'Pandy' (Pandey): British nickname for sepoy.

20. At the beginning of the outbreak in Lucknow, 'Men were seen, here and there, with figures dressed up as European children; and much to the amusement of the mob, the heads of those dolls were struck off with sword cuts.' Captain Anderson, '*A Personal narrative of the Siege of Lucknow, FSUP*, Vol. II, p. 8. Interestingly, however, right from the beginning of the outbreak, the rebels identified the enemy not so much as the '*gora*' (white men) as the 'kafir' (infidel), though the terms '*gora*' and '*feringhee*' were occasionally used. Thus, Feroz Shah refers repeatedly to 'Nazarenes' and 'Kaffirs', and only once to 'Feringhees', in a proclamation dated 17 February 1858, *FSUP*, Vol. I, pp. 459–63. Maulvi Liaqat Ali's proclamation proclaiming himself *imam* in Allahabad does not refer to *firangis* once, only to 'accursed Christians who have been awfully tyrannizing over the whole country of Hindoostan'. *FSUP*, Vol. I, pp. 445–6.

21. Conversation of Henry Lawrence with a Brahman sepoy on 9 May 1857: 'I...was startled by the dogged persistence of the man...in the belief that for ten years past Government has been engaged in measures for the forcible, or rather

fraudulent conversion of all the Natives. His argument was, that as...we had made our way through India, won Bhurtpore, Lahore & c., by fraud, so might it be possible that we mixed bone-dust with the grain sold to the Hindoos. When I told him of our power in Europe...and that, therefore, we are not at the mercy of the Sepoys, he replied that he knew that we had plenty of men and money, but that Europeans are expensive and that, therefore, we wished to take Hindoos to sea to conquer the world for us. On my remarking that the Sepoy, though a good solider on shore is a bad one at sea, by reason of his poor food. "That is just it", was the rejoinder. "You want us all to eat what you like that we may be stronger, and go everywhere." He often repeated, "I tell you what everybody says"'. Record of conversation left in Lawrence's handwriting and his letter to Mr Colvin quoted in Kaye, *History*, Vol. I, pp. 592–3.

22. Proclamation of jehad by Liaqat Ali, *FSUP*, Vol. I, p. 447.

23. Nowadays the term '*ghadar*' is used in Northern India, and '*inqilab*' is heard of everywhere. At that time '*ghadar*' meant mutiny and smacked of trouble. '*Inqilab*' literally stood for topsy-turvy, turnover, though now it figures invariably in the slogan, 'Long live the revolution' (*inqilab* zindabad).

24. Thus Nana Sahib expressed his pleasure that Kalka Prasad, a Qanango of Awadh, had joined the 'Government troops' for 'slaying the English'. Apparently unaware of the irony in his words, he exhorted the latter: 'Persevere in your devotion to the Government cause.' Nana Sahib to Kalka Pershad, 9 July 1857, letter reproduced in Kaye, *History*, Vol. II, p. 657.

25. Here was the ultimate in revolutionary inversion: the rebels were the government, the government were the rebels. Only a profoundly traditionalist rebellion could express, through the voice of the Maulvi, the thought that 'the people are determined to extirpate these rebel Christians now'. Proclamation for Jehad issued by 'the Imam named Leeaqut Ali of Allahabad, to both great and low men of Islam for massacring all the accursed Christians.' *FSUP*, Vol. I, p. 447.

26. The mutinous *sawars* of 3rd cavalry rode through Meerut town crying: 'Babas, this war is in the cause of religion, whoever likes to join, come along with us.' Note that right from the outset the Mutineers are making war, not engaging in mutiny or rebellion. Deposition of Harnam Singh, Meerut mahajan. *Narrative of Events Regarding the Mutiny in India 1857–58 and the Restoration of Authority*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1881 (henceforth *NE*), p. 337.

27. Both terms are used in Feroz Shah's proclamation of 17 February 1858, *FSUP*, Vol. I, pp. 460–1.

28. Proclamation of Khan Bahadur Khan, trans. R. Temple, *FSUP*, Vol. I, p. 443; *Risala Fath i Islam*, trans. Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, 'The Profile of a Saintly Rebel—Ahmadullah Shah', Aligarh Seminar, 1989, p. 12 n. English translations indiscriminately render '*dharma*' and '*deen*' as 'religion'. The terms have wider connotation than religious creed. *Dharma* means That which Holds Together: the

moral law that binds the cosmos, the righteous social order. *Deen* is closer to the term religious creed, but in Islam the proper practice of the creed requires a self-governing Islamic community or realm (Dar ul islam). Thus both *dharma* and *deen* stand for the entire community of righteous people, for a way of life. Indeed, they constitute the very basis of the community and its identity. Thus, fighting for *dharma* or for *deen* is not simply fighting for one's religious creed, but defending the collective identity of the entire community of people.

29. While the categories 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' were certainly traditional, the curious joint formula was not.

30. Drumbeat announcement of the sepoys in Jhansi 1857, *NE*, Vol. I, p. 555.

31. Drumbeat announcement of the sepoys in Banda 1857: 'Khulluk Khoda Mulk Badshah hukum Subhadar Sepoy Bahadur,' *NE*, Vol. I, p. 526.

32. Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion on Colonial India* (New Delhi, 1978), p. 120.

33. Certainly the political world created by the Mutiny would have been unfamiliar to Shah Alam and Mahadaji Scindia, and it would have been totally unrecognizable to Aurangzeb and Shivaji. The sepoy army and its law-making council would not have fitted into their world.

34. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1983), p. 29, quotes the Lucknow correspondent's remarks as one of several instances of 'turning things upside down', and 'turning the lowliest into highest.' Ideologically, however, the Mutiny aimed at a restoration of hierarchy rather than at its overthrow. What is interesting in this instance—a point missed by Guha—is the inversion within the inversion. The English had illegitimately inverted the right order. Now their illegitimate order was inverted and the right order restored. This was not a simple case of the 'lowliest' becoming the 'highest'. Rather, the highest was restored to his rightful place, and the upstart overthrown.

35. *NE*, Vol. I, p. 555.

36. Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an oriental Culture*, trans. from Urdu by E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (London, 1975), p. 66.

Chronological Table*

1857

March 29
Mangal Pandey, sepoy in the 34th native infantry, revolts in Barrackpore.

April 8
Mangal Pandey executed in Barrackpore

May 9
Court-martialling of 85 sepoys of a regiment at Meerut for refusing to touch greased cartridges, sepoys sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment.

May 10
Three regiments at Meerut revolt; after freeing the imprisoned sepoys they march to Delhi.

May 11
Delhi captured by sepoys; and Bahadur Shah proclaimed Emperor.

May 13–31
Rising spreads to Ferozpur, Muzaffarnagar, Aligarh, Naushera, Etawah, Mainpuri, Roorkee, Etah, Nasirabad, Mathura, Lucknow, Bareilly, and Shahjahanpur.

June 1–5
Risings in Moradabad, Badaun, Azamgarh, Sitapur, Neemuch, Banaras, Kanpur and Jhansi.

6
Nana Sahib lays siege to Kanpur.

7–8
Jhansi fort captured, Rani Lakshmi Bai restored to power, Battle of Badli Sarai and occupation of the Ridge near Delhi by the British

9–13
Rising in Dariabad, Fatehpur, Nowgong, Gwalior and Fatehgarh

26–27
Kanpur falls to Nana Sahib.

July 1
Rising in Hathras and Indore.

Siege of Lucknow Residency by the rebels.

12
Defeat of Nana Sahib's troops under Jwala Prasad and Tikka Singh at Fatehgarh.

*Courtesy: *Red the Earth, That Year, That Year...1857*, SAHMAT, New Delhi, 1997.

16
Battle of Kanpur and retreat of Nana Sahib's forces to Bithur.

27
Capture of Arrah by Kunwar Singh.

August 3
Relief of Arrah by British.

13
Defeat of Kunwar Singh at Jagdishpur.

16
Tantia Tope defeated at Bithur.

17
Sir Colin Campbell assumes chief command of the army

September 14
Kashmiri Gate at Delhi blown up by the British

19
Lahori Gate bastion at Delhi secured by British.

20
Recapture of Delhi by British.

21
Bahadur Shah surrenders to the British at Humayun's tomb.

22
Arrest and murder of Bahadur Shah's sons by Major Hodson.

October 23
British retake Lucknow after breaking through Sikandar Bagh.

26
Tantia Tope defeated on the banks of Pandu.

27
Tantia Tope dislodges the British from Kanpur and captures it.

December 6
Tantia Tope, dislodged by Campbell from Kanpur, joins Lakshmi Bai.

9
Battle of Kalpi, retreat of Tantia Tope.

1858

March 5
Mehndi Hussain and the Rajas of Gonda and Chardah attack the British camp at Chanda.

21
Lucknow brought under complete control by the British.

22
Kunwar Singh captures Azamgarh.

April 1
Tantia Tope, arriving with 22,000 men to aid Lakshmi Bai, is defeated by the British on the banks of the Betwa.

3–5
Storming of Jhansi by the British: Jhansi fort falls; and Lakshmi Bai flees; Kunwar Singh defeats British at Azamgarh a second time.

23
Kunwar Singh scores yet another victory against the British at Jagdishpur.

26
Death of Kunwar Singh.

May 6
Capture of Bareilly by the British from Bahadur Khan.

11
British lay siege to Shahjahanpur defended by Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah.

22
Second battle of Kalpi. Lakshmi Bai, Nawab of Banda, and Rao Sahib (nephew of Nana Sahib) lead the rebels.

24
Kalpi falls to the British.

June 1
Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rao Sahib, and Nawab of Banda defeat Scindia of Gwalior; capture and proclaim Nana Sahib as Peshwa.

17
British Lay Siege to Gwalior; Rani of Jhansi killed in action at Gwalior; Tantia Tope flees.

20
British recapture Gwalior.

August 2
Transfer of East India Company to Crown.

14
Battle of Kotra (Udaipur) and defeat of Tantia Tope.

October 17–19
British lay seige to Jagdishpur defended by Amar Singh, brother of Kunwar Singh. Amar Singh defeated at Nenadi.

1859

January 21
Battle of Sikhar, defeat of Tantia Tope.

April 7
Tantia Tope betrayed by Raja Man Singh and made prisoner.

18
Tantia Tope hanged.

October to December 4
Final operations against rebels in Northern Oudh and Nepal and capture of 4,000 of Nana Sahib's followers.

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A Note from the Volume Editor

The conceptualization of this project goes back to 1995. In fact, it was never intended to be completed and released as a book in 2007. The basic idea over these years however remains the same—to offer to students of Indian history and the interested reader a perspective of the 1857 Rebellion, especially of the diverse positions of writers and scholars, ranging from contemporaries (officials and writers) to present-day historians. This becomes especially relevant in a context when many of the published works are getting increasingly difficult to procure, and the phenomenon of globalization in this post, post-modern twenty first century which makes a large section of the Indian elite see imperialism as a 'given' part of life.

Nevertheless, today 1857 has ironically entered the public domain in a big way. The recent spell of Hindi films and their 'realism', and especially the fantasies they evoke, are a part of the present-day efforts at arousing patriotism by visually keeping the memories of 1857 alive. This coincides with the time when the Indian state gets ready to 'celebrate' the 150th year of 1857—undoubtedly one of the most serious armed mass movements faced by the British in the colonial world. However, various nuances and complexities get lost when jingoism along competitive lines, involving politics and massive financial investments are made to (mis)appropriate the legacy of the past. As an example, one can perhaps see the anti-imperialist rhetoric directed against British imperialism when it comes to the 1857 celebrations, co-existing with a complete silence on U.S, imperialism and its role in the twenty-first century. It is here that the historian's craft is put to test and the works of historians assume serious significance.

In many ways, research on 1857 is yet to begin. Sources in most of the regional archives are yet to be explored. Besides, very little is known

about the forms of anti-imperialist resistance of the mid-nineteenth century beyond the strict boundaries of the 1857 Rebellion. One can only hope that these features receive serious attention from historians. This would most certainly alter our understanding both of the Rebellion and the way a colonial society was sought to be beaten down to submission through the first phase of naked terror over the nineteenth century, which was indeed a traumatic period of transition.

Various institutions and individuals have contributed to make this work possible. I am grateful to Prof. Mrinal Miri who, as the Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, had allowed me access to the Institute's library in 1995; the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; the Sri Venkateswara College Library; the Indian Council for Historical Research Library (all at New Delhi); the British Library and the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (both at London). I would also like to acknowledge the help of SAHMAT.

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New Delhi — Biswamoy Pati

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Contributors

K. M. ASHRAF taught history at Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi.

CHARLES BALL AND J. W. KAYE, colonial officials/historians, among the pioneers to write about 1857.

GAUTAM BHADRA is Professor of History, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

C. A. BAYLY is Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History, University of Cambridge.

E. I. BRODKIN is Chair and Professor, Department of History, Connecticut College, New London, USA.

S. B. CHAUDHURI, was Professor of history at Dacca University, the Presidency College, and at the Burdwan University.

K. K. DATTA was Professor, Department of History at Patna University.

'TALMIZ KHALDUN' was the pseudonym used by Satinder Singh, a senior journalist who worked for *The Times of India*, Delhi.

IQTIDAR ALAM KHAN, retired as Professor, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University.

R. C. MAJUMDAR was Professor of history at Dacca University.

RUDRANGSHU MUKHERJEE, formerly Reader, Department of History at Calcutta University and presently editor, editorial pages, *The Telegraph*.

BADRI NARAYAN is Fellow, G. B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad.

BISWAMOY PATI is Reader, Department of History, Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi.

RAJAT KANTA RAY, Vice Chancellor, Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan. He was formerly Head of the Department of History, Presidency College, Kolkata.

TAPTI ROY, taught history at Kolkata and is presently based in Dubai.

S. N. SEN, was Professor, Department of History, Calcutta University and Keeper of Records, Government of India (1939), now known as the National Archives of India.

K. S. SINGH, was a social historian, who retired as the Director General, Anthropological Survey of India.

ERIC STOKES was Smuts Professor of Commonwealth History, University of Cambridge and Fellow, St. Catharine's College, Cambridge.

Cont'd from front flap

This unique collection includes writings from imperialist historians like Charles Ball and J.W. Kaye; traditional Indian proponents—R.C. Majumdar, S.B. Chaudhuri, S.N. Sen; classic essays by K.M. Ashraf and Eric Stokes as well as modern interrogators like Rudrangshu Mukherjee, C.A. Bayly, Tapti Roy, I.A. Khan, and Rajat Kanta Ray.

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Biswamoy Pati teaches history at Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi. He currently holds a Research Award from the University Grants Commission, India.

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'As to the object of the war, it was beyond doubt the maintenance of English rule in India.' —Karl Marx

'[T]he fact is that for a long period many grievances had been rankling in the hearts of the people.' —Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

'[T]he story went forth that the English, in prosecution of a long-cherished design, and under instructions from the Queen in Council, had greased the Sepoys' cartridges with the fat of pigs and cows, for the express purpose of defiling both Mahomedans and Hindoos.' —J.W. Kaye

'[I]t is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the so-called First National war of Independence of 1857 is neither the First, nor a War of Independence.'
—R.C.Majumdar

'The causes of the mutiny in the army were in part purely military, in part a discontent shared by the general population.' —S.B.Chaudhuri

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